

French-English Battles in the early Middle Ages (1066-1326)

From the French Conquest of
England to the outbreak of the
Hundred Years' War.

JEAN-CLAUDE CASTEX



FRENCH-ENGLISH BATTLES

IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

(1066 - 1326)

*(From the French Conquest of England to the
outbreak of the Hundred Years' War.)*



Jean-Claude Castex

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French-English Battles in the Early Middle Ages,
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Years' War.

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Cover : Bayeux Tapestry. (sample) While 21st-century Englishmen only want to have been defeated by the Normans, the Bayeux Tapestry describes the Duke's army as "the French" (Franci). Here English and French have fallen together in battle. *Hic ceciderunt simul Angli et **Franci** in pr(o)elio.*

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CHRONOLOGICAL DIRECTORY OF FRANCO-ENGLISH BATTLES IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

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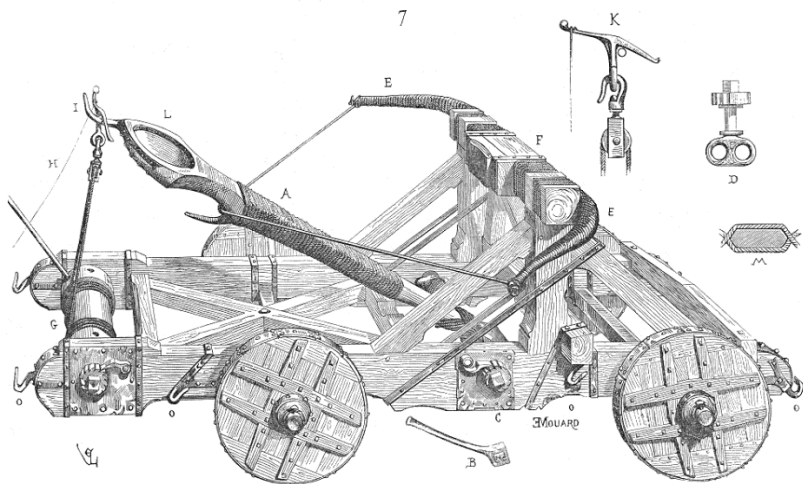
END OF THE FRENCH CONQUEST WAR OF ENGLAND

WAR BETWEEN WILLIAM I AND HIS SON ROBERT CURTHOSE

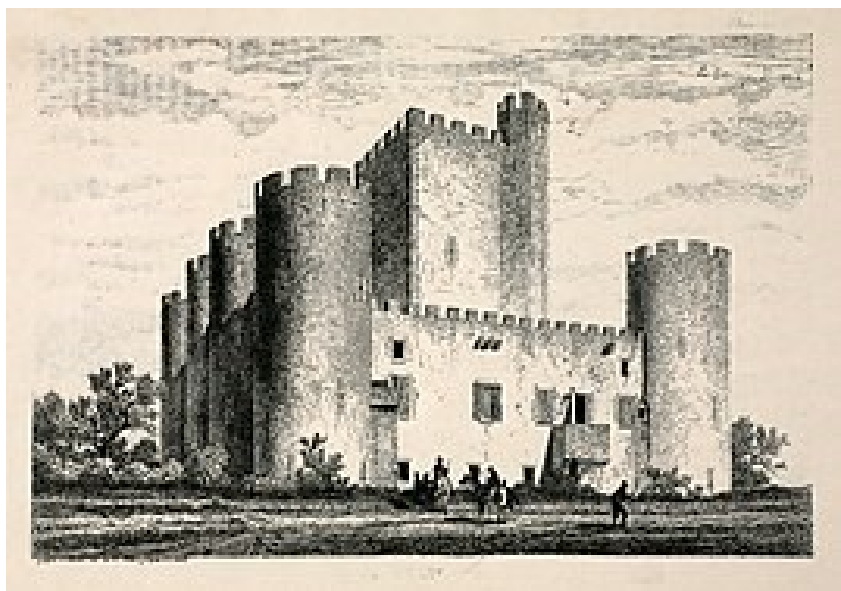
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BEGINNING OF THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR



A ballista according to Violet le Duc. Priv.Coll.



Castle of Roquetaillade.
(In Gascogne, near Bordeaux) Priv. Coll.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

In the period covered by this repertoire, the *Plantagenêt Empire*, also known as the *Angevin Empire* 1154-1399, marked a critical moment for the kings of France, who saw their power largely endangered by vassals bearing the title of King of England. This was an assemblage of several states: a kingdom (England), two duchies (Aquitaine and Normandy) and several counties.

DYNASTY OF THE DUKES OF THE FRENCH PROVINCE OF NORMANDY

*Rollon ou Rolfr ou Rou, 1st Duke of the province of Normandy [911-932]

*William [Guillaume Longue-Épée], illegitimate son of Rollon and a native Frenchwoman from the French province of Normandy; 2nd Duke of Normandy [932 - 942],

*Richard Ist, 3rd Duke of Normandy [942 - 996], illegitimate son of Guillaume et a Frenchwoman of this province.

*Richard II, 4th Duke of Normandy [996 à 1026]; son of Richard I^{er}. Richard II' sister (Emma), married two kings of England in succession: Ethelred (king from 978 to 1016) and Canute the Great (1016 to 1035); Edward the Confessor (king from 1042 to 1066) was born of Ethelred and Emma.

*Richard III, 5th Duke of Normandy [1026-1027]; the eldest son of Richard II

*Robert the Devil or the Magnificent [Robert *le Diable* or *le Magnifique* depending on your point of view], 6th Duke of Normandy de 1027 à 1035; fils puîné de Richard II.

*William the Bastard, then the Conqueror, 7th Duke of Normandy [1035-1087, and king of England [1066-1087], illegitimate son of Robert the Devil and his French mistress *Arlette* (ou *Herlèva*) *Fulbert*. [William subsequently married his mother Arlette to a nobleman, Herluin de Conteville, from whom she had Odon de Bayeux (bishop) and Robert de Mortain; William granted his two half-brothers' vast territories in the colony that had become England].

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

*Robert Curthose, 8th Duke of Normandy [1087-1106]; eldest son of William the Conqueror and Mathilde of Flanders.

*Henry Ist Beauclerc, 9th Duke of Normandy [1106-1135] and King of England [1100-1135]; he was the third son of William the Conqueror and Queen Mathilde of Flanders.

*Étienne de Blois, 10th Duke of Normandy [1135-1144, and king of England [1135-1154], son of Adèle, younger daughter of William the Conqueror, and Étienne de Blois.

*Geoffroy Plantagenêt (Duke of Anjou). Through his marriage to Mathilde, daughter of Henry Beauclerc, Geoffroy d'Anjou became the 11th Duke of Normandy who reigned from 1144 to 1150.

*Henry II Plantagenêt, son of Mathilde and Geoffroy, was the 12th Duke of Normandy [1150-1189], and king of England [1154-1189]. Henri II married the rich and powerful heiress Eleanor of Aquitaine, who had been repudiated by the king of France.

*Richard the Lionheart [Cœur-de-Lion], 13th Duke of Normandy [1189-1199] and king of England [1190-1199] was the eldest son of Henry II and Eleanor.

*John the Landless [or Jean-sans-Terre, or John Lackland] 14^e Duke of Normandy [1199-1204], and king of England [1199-1216] was the second son of Henry II and Eleanor d'Aquitaine.

In the period covered by this repertory, the Plantagenet Empire, also known as the Angevin Empire 1154-1399, certainly marked one of the most critical moments for the Kings of France, who saw their power largely dominated by vassals bearing the title of King of England. The Plantagenet Empire was an amalgamation of several states: one kingdom (England), two duchies (Aquitaine and Normandy) and several counties.



French English battles in the early Middle Ages

KINGS OF FRANCE	KINGS OF ENGLAND
1-Philippe I 1060-1108	1-William I the Bastard then the Conqueror, 1066-1087
2-Louis VI le Gros or le Batailleur 1108-1137	2-William II Rufus or le Roux 1087-1100
3-Philippe I 1129-1131	3-Henry I Beaulerc 1100-1135
4-Louis VII le Jeune or le Pieux 1137-1180	4-Stephen (Etienne de Blois) & Matilde l'Emperesse ¹ 1135-1154
5-Philippe II Auguste 1180-1223	5-Henry II Curtmantle (Court manteau) 1154-1189
6-Louis VIII le Lion 1223-1226	6-Richard I Cœur-de-Lion (The Lion-heart) 1189-1199
7-Louis IX Saint-Louis or le Prudhomme 1226-1270	7-John Lackland (Jean-sans-Terre) 1199-1216
8-Philippe III le Hardi [l'Intrépide] 1270-1285	8-Henry II Plantagenêt 1216-1272
9-Philippe IV le Bel 1285-1314	9-Edward I Longshanks [long tibias] 1272-1307
10-Louis X le Hutin [le Querelleur] 1314-1316	10-Edward II 1307-1327
11-Jean I le Posthume 1316-1316	11-Edward III 1327-1377
12-Philippe V le Long 1316-1322	
13-Charles IV le Bel 1322-1328	
14-Philippe VI 1329-1350	

¹ Matilde or Matilda was the daughter of Henry I Beaulerc, King of England. At the tender age of twelve, Matilda was married to the German emperor Henry V. Hence the nickname "l'Emperesse", which she retained throughout history. Widowed at the age of 9, she married Étienne de Blois.

Capture of the Andelys.

Date of the Action : 1119

Location: On the banks of the Seine, in Normandy, on the edge of Île-de-France. 49°26'North, 01°44'Est.

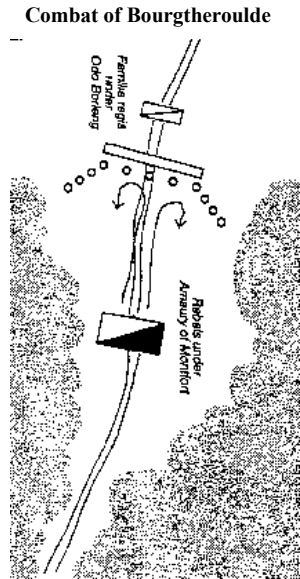
Conflict : War of English Succession.

Context : Asselin, who governed Andély for the King of England, Henry I, was irritated by the proceedings brought against him by Archbishop Geoffrey, to whom he was indebted. He therefore went to the king of France, Louis VI the Fat (Le Gros), who was himself anxious to take advantage of every opportunity to lower the English power, especially since the *Battle of Tinchebray* [26 September 1106] between the two brothers, heirs of William the Conqueror². Louis The Fat was in Pontoise. Asselin offered to hand over the city to him, in spite of the wishes of the burghers.

Chiefs present **French*: The King of France, Louis VI the Fat, and Asselin, Governor of the fortress of the Andelys for the King of England, Duke of Normandy. **Anglo-Normans*: unknown.

Troops engaged *Probably about a hundred French soldiers during the first phase, and Louis the Fat [Le Gros]' army: 2,000 men, thereafter.

Strategy or tactics : Cunning was the determining element. The famous fortress of Château-Gaillard did not yet exist, and Les Andélys was a double walled agglomeration: Le Petit-Andéli was located on the banks of the Seine River, and Le Grand Andéli, a few hundred meters to the



² Duke Robert Courteuse, and King Henry I Beaulerc of England.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

east, on the banks of the Gambon River, in a lower plain called Grande-Prairie.

Summary of the action : Louis VI nicknamed "The Fat" [Le Gros], gave the combat leader Asselin a troop of French soldiers whom he introduced into a barn. They hid under the straw and remained there during the night. The next morning, at the moment when the King of France presented himself before the gate of the city, the English soldiers and the frightened bourgeois rushed into the citadel while the hidden French soldiers also uttered the English *war cry* (*St. George!*). But no sooner had these French soldiers arrived in the castle than they began to shout "*Saint-Denis! Montjoie!*", the French war cry. Saying this, they chased away the English soldiers and the burghers and opened the gates to the King of France who occupied the city.

As a result of this English defeat, the city belonged to the King of France, at least for a time. Shortly afterwards the **Battle of Bourghtheroulde** took place³ [26 March 1124]. The "pro-English" Normans were commanded by the Norman Aimery de Montfort and the pro-French royal Normans by Odo de Bourlin⁴. The latter's plan was a masterpiece of tactical art. This tactic was taken over by Edward III at Crécy. A central line of men-at-arms and knights, all dismounted, preceded by a first line of dismounted archers⁵ who overflowed on the flanks slightly folded forward so as to take the enemy from the flank and the front. In the rear stood the cavalry reserve, ready to deliver the decisive shock from the rear on the enemy line as soon as it gave signs of weakening. The action of each weapon was well combined, and Odo de Bourlin evidently had the makings of a great strategist. Opposite, Aimery de Montfort had his mounted men-at-arms massed without much discipline, in the customary French manner of the time. And it was Odo who had the victory. His plan completely ignored the rigid and absurd rules of medieval chivalry⁶.

³ In the Eure.

⁴ Odo Borleng or de Bourling.

⁵ Although considered foot soldiers, Odo's archers were mounted when his army moved.

⁶ Only the frontal attack was worthy of a knight; lateral and especially reverse maneuvers were condemned by *honor*. Preparatory shots too; Killing from a distance was cowardly. Aimery's men were condemned to be beaten because they respected the laws of chivalry.

Battle of the Andélyls.

Date of the Action : 1196

Location : Double fortified cities located on the banks of the Seine, on the border of the province of Normandy. 49°26', 01°44'.

Conflict : Feudal conflict between the kings of France and England.

Background : Richard the Lionheart Plantagenet, son of King Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine, had been king of England since 1189 [and would remain so until 1199]. In 1191, he left for the Third Crusade with Philip II, King of France. Philip returned home before him and began to seize English strongholds. Richard arrived in England on 13 March and returned to the continent to wage war and retake the places the French had taken from him in Normandy, Maine, Beauce, and Touraine. Richard had brought to the continent a troop of 5,400 "half-wild Welshmen", commanded by a chief routier⁷ named Mercader. Now, these Welsh had built up a solid reputation for cruelty on the frontiers of France. They ravaged French territory, horribly tormented and tortured older people and children, raped women. Officially, they were protecting the construction of the fortress of Château-Gaillard undertaken at Les Andélyls by Richard the Lionheart to secure the border of his continental province.

Leaders present *Mercader.

Numbers *5,400 Welsh and probably as many French.

Tactics: Pincer attack, from the front and rear simultaneously, an innovation that showed that there were no knights in the ranks of the combatants.

⁷ *Routiers* (French: [ʁutje]) were mercenary soldiers of the Middle Ages. Their particular distinction from other paid soldiers of the time was that they were organised into bands (*rutta* or *routes*). Mercader (Mercadier) was a Gascon routier.

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This tactic of *attacking from the rear* was then considered "cowardice" by the code of ethics of the Chivalry⁸.

Summary of the action : One day when the Welsh of the English army were disposed to protect the construction site at Les Andelys, a French troop of Philippe threw itself on them in the valley of the Andelys. The French attacked them from the front and from the rear at the same time. The fight was extremely fierce. In the end, the Welsh were defeated. They were all massacred.

Losses *on the English side: 5,400 *Welsh*. **French*: losses unknown.

Consequence of this English defeat : Learning that his Welsh Corps had been exterminated, Richard the Lionheart flew into a violent rage and ordered that three French prisoners be thrown from the Château-Gaillard and that fifteen others have their eyes gouged out. Then Lionheart sent the blind men to Philippe's camp under the leadership of one of them, to whom he had left his right eye. Seeing this, the King of France, Philippe Auguste, had the eyes of fifteen English knights put out "so that no one could esteem him inferior to Lionheart in strength and courage (sic!), or think that he feared him". Each of them wanted to be more of a lionheart than the other ! Further proof that when aristocrats fought, it was the commoners who took the blows.



⁸ Fifteen centuries earlier, Epaminondas [Theban general, 411-363 BC, famous for defeating the Spartans at Leuctra and Mantinea] invented the oblique formation [Λοξε Φαλαγγξ, *loxê phalanx*] which allowed him to strike the enemy from the flank or from the rear.

Siege of the Andelys.

Date of the action : July 1202.

Location : On the north bank of the Seine, at the entrance to Normandy.
Geographical coordinates: 49°26'N;01°44'E.

Conflict : Feudal war between the kings of France and England.

Background : *The Treaty of the Goulet* between Richard the Lionheart, King of England, and Philip II Augustus, King of France [1180-1223], was signed in May 1200 on the island of Goulet, now Île-aux-Vaches. He fixed the boundaries of their states. But Arthur's murder⁹ hastened the conquest of Upper Normandy, which was taken by a rear-attack from the Bretons and the Cotentin opponents.

Leaders in attendance *Tranchemer¹⁰ commanded the Anglo-Norman squadron and Guillaume Le Maréchal¹¹ the Landing Corps. *The French army was led by King Philippe Auguste himself.

Troops engaged *The English squadron, with its Landing Corps, numbered about 9 or 10,000 men. *Philip probably had the same number of soldiers.

⁹ Arthur I, Count of Brittany from 1196 to 1203, was born in Nantes [1187-1203], the posthumous son of Count Geoffrey II [himself son of King Henry II of England Plantagenet] and Countess Constance. On the death of his uncle Richard the Lionheart, Arthur, a pretender to the throne of England, was assassinated by John the Landless (or Lackland, Jean-sans-Terre), Richard's brother. This saved Brittany from a "British" fate, like the other Scottish and Irish Celtic countries, and thus the horrors of ethnic cleansing attempts (like the Highlands Clearances and the Irish expulsions).

¹⁰ Alain Tranchemer (shipowner and captain) took his nickname ("slicing through the sea" with his bow) from the galley he commanded. Guillaume le Maréchal (William Marshal) was Earl of Pembroke.

¹¹ Called William Marshall by the English.

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Strategy or tactics : Simultaneity was essential for this amphibious attack, but the English ships were late, which caused the attempt (to lift the blockade) to fail. The site of the battle is a group of sandy islets, one of which, that of Bernières, was then described as a peninsula because a strip of land connected it to the shore.

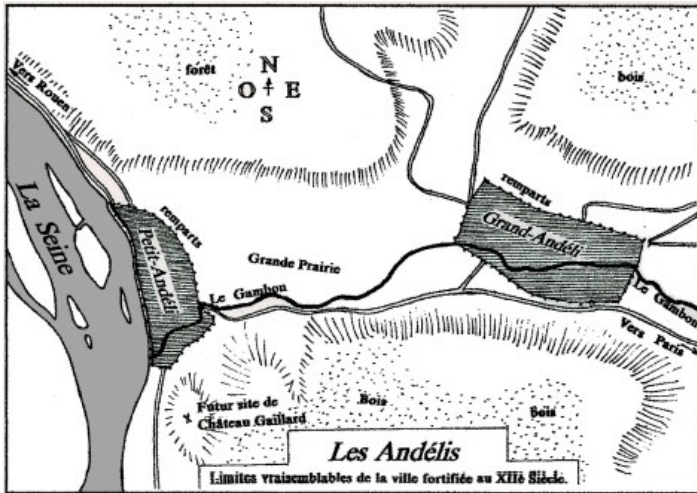
Summary of the action : Alain Tranchemer's 70 ships, constantly cruising between the islands of Ushant [Ouessant] and Guernsey, hindered the maritime intervention of the Bretons. They were recalled to the River Seine where the fortified island of Andely, tightly blockaded by Philip Augustus, was on the point of capitulation. Tranchemer went up the river with 3,000 men to clear the fortified islet. He was to cut the bridge which connected the two corps of the French army, posted, one under the walls of Petit-Andély, the other in the Bernières peninsula. William Marischal would assist him by attacking Bernières' troops with 7,000 men. But Tranchemer arrived too late. Marischal was in complete rout. Tranchemer came up against a formidable barrage (dike) behind which a bridge of boats formed a curtain wall: the French crossbowmen and slingers greeted the assailants with iron maces, globes of fire, jets of boiling pitch or other incendiary projectiles. A large beam which the Anglo-Normans were trying to detach from the dike fell on two of their galleys, which it shattered. Discouraged, Tranchemer withdrew, abandoning two other vessels, laden with provisions, to a fisherman from Nantes, Gaubert, who had set out in pursuit of him.

Casualties: unknown but probably quite heavy on both sides.

As a consequence of this English defeat, the fortified city was to fall and thus allow the French to lay siege to the fortress of Château-Gaillard that Richard the Lionheart had just built [1196] before his death. [1199] His death occurred under the following circumstances: a Gascon Lord owed a small sum of money to Richard the Lionheart. Faced with the nobleman's evasive refusal to pay his debt, Richard invested the castle of the Gascon lord of Châlus, in the Limoges region. During the siege, Richard refused an offer of conditional surrender. One day, while he was observing the state of the walls, an arrow stuck in his shoulder. He

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immediately ordered an assault and the castle was taken. Only after that he had the arrow removed. But it was too late. The wound became infected, and septicemia killed Richard. At 42, he had reigned for 10 years. His brother John the Landless succeeded him as head of the Anglo-Angevin Empire.



Battle of Archenbray.

Other name : Some historians dispute that Archenbray is Auchy-en-Bray.

Date of the action : around 20 January 1079.

Location : Disappeared village located E.S.E. of Gournay-en-Bray and S.-W. of Gerberoy. Probable geographical coordinates: 49°29', 01°44'.

Conflict : War between William I, King of England, and one of his sons, Robert Curthose (Courteheuse).

Context : Disagreement reigned between William, Duke of Normandy and King of England, and his children, overly ambitious and insatiable. The first, Robert Curthose, was to inherit Normandy and the second William¹² England. Robert rebelled against his father and took refuge in France, at Gerberoy, on the border of the Vexin, where he gathered a troop of French and Norman barons. In accordance with the policy of *divide and rule*, King Philip I of France encouraged Robert in his struggle against his father by pretending to consider him the legitimate Duke of Normandy. He therefore lent Robert the magnificent fortress of Gerberoy which was besieged by William. But the latter had to lift the siege when a French army arrived, and retreated to the southwest. Robert set out in pursuit of him with his army.

Leaders present **French*: Robert Curthose, son of William the Conqueror. **English*: William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy and King of England.

Troops engaged *Approximately 2,000 men on each side.

¹² William II.

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Strategy or tactics : It was more a series of individual combats than an overall movement. The plain of Archembray, the site of the battle, was low and sometimes marshy. Knights and men-at-arms fought in single combat, until one of the two armies withdrew.

Summary of the action : When King Philippe's French army arrived in front of Gerberoy, the King of England William the Conqueror decided to lift the siege of the city and retreat to Gournay-en-Bray. To do this he sent off his infantry, who were less noisy but slower, then the baggage wagons, and he brought up the rearguard with his cavalry. His rebellious son, Robert Curthose, immediately set off on the road from Gerberoy to Gournay, in parallel with Guillaume's. There were only secondary skirmishes between Cavalry. Guillaume then gave up going to Gournay-en-Bray and went deep into the thick forest of Haut-Bray in order to escape his son and the French under his son's command. But between Ferrières and Saint-Germer, the forest disappeared, and the English troops found themselves in the open. Robert, who had followed a parallel route a little further north, now found himself face to face with the English king. Little is known about this battle. William the Conqueror had a horse killed under him. The battle lasted several hours¹³. As the legend goes, Robert wounded his father without recognizing him, but this seems very unlikely. This battle was in fact a cavalry fight, probably with archers, which allowed the cavalymen to catch their breath between charges. Eventually, the English army was forced to retreat, leaving many dead and wounded on the field. The survivors of the English army crossed the Epte in a hurry under cover of night¹⁴ to regain the solid stronghold of Gournay-en-Bray "with sixteen towers."

Losses **French*: unknown, no doubt significant. **English*: many killed. Guillaume Rufus (Le Roux)¹⁵ was seriously wounded and took refuge in the monastery of Saint-Germer.

¹³ 9 hours according to some chroniclers.

¹⁴. To Neufmarché or by a nearby ford.

¹⁵ Second son of William the Conqueror.

Raid against Barfleur-Cherbourg.

Date of the action : 14 September 1326.

Location : Cotentin Peninsula, Normandy, France. Coordinates: 49°67' N;01°26'W.

Conflict : English Civil Wars: Feudal war between the kings of France and England, one being, just for his continental possessions, the vassal of the French.

Background : The Flemish Wars lasted from 1299 to 1304. England was France's ally in attacking the Flemings. Then, in 1323, the English war was rekindled until 1328 by the confiscation by the French of English Guyenne. The English squadron of the *Cinque Ports*¹⁶ transported 800 archers to Guyenne. Edward pampered the Flemings, Philip the Fair found an ally in the Scotsman Robert Bruce. The property of the English in France was confiscated along the coast for security reasons. Their public auctioning sale was used to pay French shipping companies.

Leaders in attendance *English admirals John Sturmy, John Felton and Nicolas Kyriel. *French leaders unknown.

Number of personnel engaged : unknown.

Strategy or tactics : *Surprise* was the major element.

Summary of the action : In May 1326, John Sturmy, John Felton and Nicholas Kyriel, English admirals from the North, West and South, began attacking the French merchant ships in Normandy. They captured 120 ships and massacred a large number of Frenchmen. Edward III had hitherto lulled the distrust of the French to sleep, and the suddenness of

¹⁶ L'amiral John Cromwell.

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this offensive surprised the latter, who at that time had no admiral. A second English attack completed the disconcerting of the French: the English fleet of Admiral Kyriel threw itself on the Cotentin. On September 14, 1326, it arrived before Barfleur with 7 vessels, 14 ships and about fifteen barges loaded with men-at-arms. They burned the surrounding area, looted and massacred part of the civilian population. The abbey of Cherbourg, which could not be protected by the weak garrison of the city, was again pillaged.

Casualties : unknown.

As a result of this French defeat, hostilities between the French and the English were increasing. The Hundred Years' War was about to break out.



**Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of England
destroyed by the 1066 French invasion.**

Siege of Barnstaple.

Date of the Action : 1067

Location : In Devon, England; 51°08'N, 04°06'W.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Campaign for the pacification of Devon, 1067.

Background : After subduing Exeter, William immediately marched on Devon, where he stormed and almost completely destroyed the town of Barnstaple, to the NW of the county. The city did not capitulate until 23 houses were destroyed by the French. It actually had only 40 houses inside the village, and 9 outside.

Leaders in attendance *William the Conqueror commanded the French army.

Forces : In addition to the French knights, William had enlisted, for political purposes, an English battalion to put down the insurrection.

Strategy or tactics : Capture of the city by breach assault. The breach was created by throwing large rocks and by mining.

Action Summary : Details are unknown.

Casualties : Unknown although very heavy, especially on the English side who endured some massacres.

As a result of this English defeat , the city was partially destroyed, its inhabitants dispossessed in favor of the French and *collaborators*¹⁷.

¹⁷ Some words or phrases have been used despite their obvious anachronistic nature, in order to avoid unnecessary paraphrases.

Battle of Bleadon.

Date of the Action : 1068

Location : Area south of the Severn Estuary, SW of England. 51° 30'N; 02° 94'E

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Campaign for the pacification of England in 1068.

Background : While the French were winning the Battle of the Humber over the English, Harold's sons took the opportunity to raid southwest England. The exiled English landed at the mouth of the Avon River from a fleet of 60 ships. Their small army was gradually reinforced by insurgents because the inhabitants spontaneously rose up as they approached the French garrison. Paradoxically, they ravaged and plundered the area¹⁸, and tried to storm Bristol but failed.

Leaders in attendance *Guillaume Dreux de Montaigu commanded the French occupation forces. Eadnoth the Staller¹⁹ commanded the pro-French English contingent. *Harold's sons, Godwine, Eadmund, and Magnus, commanded the insurgent army.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown.

Strategy or tactics : A pitched battle in open country with melee. The English contingent was placed in the front line for psychological purposes. William wanted²⁰ to get rid of Eadnoth (who did not inspire confidence to William) and *reportedly* asked that he be placed on the front line.

¹⁸ This did nothing to increase their popularity among the English population.

¹⁹ Eadnoth the Staller was one of England's most significant *quislings* [traitor]. He was an Anglo-Saxon official and landowner who nonetheless took up service in the new French colony after 1066.

²⁰ According to some historians.

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Summary of the action : Having failed before Bristol, which was firmly held by the French, the English army entered Somersetshire but was attacked by a small French army. A contingent of English auxiliaries commanded by Eadnoth The Staller, King Harold's former captain, was sent to support the French. Eadnoth was killed. Finally, defeated, the insurgent English army had to re-embark.

Casualties : The British losses were very heavy, especially among the pro-French English contingent placed in the front line. The hatred of seeing "collaborators" (*quislings*) was probably not unrelated to this hecatomb. Their leader Eadnoth was himself massacred.

As a consequence of this English defeat , the insurgent English army had to re-embark. Before returning to exile in Ireland, these emigrants stopped to ravage Devonshire and Cornwall.



Fortress of Bourg-en-Gironde

Attack on Bourg-en-Gironde.

Date of the action : April-September 1296.

Localisation : Gironde, France, 45°03'; 0°55'

Conflict : Feudal war between the kings of France and England, the latter being for his continental possessions, the vassal of the other.

Context : Philip the Fair [Philippe Le Bel] of France wanted to isolate England and create a kind of economic continental blockade. Only Guyenne, which was partly English, escaped its control. He therefore sent a squadron to blockade Bourg. The squadron left Cherbourg for this purpose on 1 April 1296.

Leaders in attendance *The English governor of Bourg was Robert Fitz-James. *Robert d'Artois commanded the French land-troops (infantry) and Othon de Toucy the transport squadron.

Troops engaged : Othon de Toucy's squadron consisted of 20 galleys and galiots²¹.

Strategy or tactics : unknown.

Summary of the action : After the raid on Guernsey, the French squadron of Othon de Toucy went south to blockade Bourg, which, closely pressed by the French, was in great distress. Suddenly, a ship came out of Blaye and managed to slip between the galleys of the French blockade. This nave was commanded by Simon de Montégu. At this time a powerful English squadron was reported from Bayonne and commanded by Henry of Lincoln²². Too weak, Toucy withdrew to the French markets of

²¹ A galiot was a type of ship with oars, also known as a half-galley, then, from the 17th century forward, a ship with sails and oars.

²² Henri de Lacy, 3rd earl of Lincoln (1249-1311).

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Bordeaux and La Réole. At the end of October or the beginning of November, the English fleet left after supplying the besieged place, but without attacking Bordeaux. Henri Marchese, who had just replaced Toucy, staggered [scattered] his warships²³ between La Réole²⁴ and La Rochelle to intercept all convoys.

As a consequence of this French failure, the other squadron in the Channel²⁵ consisted of 7 huissiers²⁶, 10 galleys and several galiots. It blockaded the continent with Rouen as its base of operations, and Calais as its outpost. As the plan to invade England had been abandoned, all transports had been disarmed and only warships remained in fighting condition. Unable to sell their wool other than by fraud, the English merchants protested to the King. But the weak point of the continental blockade was that it also hit the Flemings, who no longer received English wool. The continental blockade began in the Netherlands and collapsed in 1297. The years 1297 and 1298 were times of maritime piracy. A truce was signed at the instigation of Pope Boniface VIII on June 30, 1298.²⁷ It was extended in 1300 and 1301. But Bordeaux revolted and decided on the loss of Aquitaine for the French²⁸. The treaty of 29 May 1303 sanctioned this loss, for in Flanders the French had been beaten by the revolted Flemings and were in a position of weakness. Bordeaux, badly guarded by the French, revolted and gave itself to the English.



²³ 114 galleys, 5 bailiffs and several galiots.

²⁴ La Réole or La Réale or La Royale, is a fortress located on the Garonne River.

²⁵ Commissioned by Nicolas du Perraz

²⁶ Huissier ship, transport (usually of horses) with a single sail.

²⁷ Boniface VIII (Benedetto Caetani) was pope at the age of 59, in 1294, and until his death in 1303. He remained famous for his quarrels with Philip the Fair who, in 1303, had him ill-treated in Anagni (the birthplace of this pope) by William of Nogaret and Colonna.

²⁸ In fact, until the end of the Hundred Years' War, the merchants of Aquitaine (who constituted the ruling class) hesitated between France and, above all, England, which granted them many franchises. The Bordeaux merchant lobby was very powerful in London and it was in this way that Gascon units participated, sometimes decisively [as at Poitiers], in most of the great English victories of the endless Hundred Years' War. In contrast to its behaviour with Ireland and Scotland, England never showed any brutality towards the Gascons, although some insurrections had to be suppressed. It is true that the bloody and perverse religious wars of William of Orange had not yet passed by!

Battle of Bouvines.

Date of the action : 27 July 1214.

Location : Small village in France, between Lille and Tournay, located south-east of Lille, accessible by the National Road 35. The battle took place near the present railway crossing on the road from Bouvines to Gruson. 50°57'; 03°18'.

Conflict : Coalition against France, the English and the Imperials²⁹. Campaign of 1214.

Context : Wishing to reconquer the continental provinces of his Angevin patrimony, the King of England John the Landless made an alliance with the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto³⁰ IV, as well as with several disgruntled vassals of the King of France, including the Count of Flanders. The Allies were trying to march on Paris.

Leaders in French Presence * The King of France Philippe-Auguste commanded the French army. *Anglo-Allies: The Earl of Salisbury was at the head of the English army. Emperor Otto IV led the Imperial army. Count Ferrand of Flanders led the Flemish army.

Troops Engaged : The number of soldiers varies greatly depending on the source. What is certain is that the Allies totaled almost twice the strength of the French army. According to more recent studies, the French were to have numbered about 30,000 men and the Allies 60,000³¹. The

²⁹ In reality it was not until the sixteenth century, and until 1806, that the armies of the emperors of Germany were designated under the name of Imperials. By extension, we have called the soldiers of the same empire this in the thirteenth century.

³⁰ Otto IV in German.

³¹ Including 6,000 knights and men-at-arms, and 18,000 infantry.

presence of mounted sergeants, ancestors of the current Gendarmerie Nationale, was reported in the French army³².

Strategy or Tactics : The battlefield was a plateau without natural obstacles. The French army had its back against the village of Bouvines and the bridge over the Marcq River of great tactical importance, and which was therefore guarded by the King's sergeants. The French held a front of 3 km. They had overstretched their lines to the maximum to avoid being turned by the Anglo-Imperials (English, Germans and Austrians). In three rows: crossbowmen in front; then sergeants of the communes on horse and foot; and in the rear, chivalry and men-at-arms. The French *right wing* [Brother Guérin] faced the Knights of Ferrand of Flanders. On the left, Philip, Bishop of Beauvais, was fighting against the English under William of Salisbury. Philippe, who was a priest, fought with a sledgehammer because, ironically, his religion forbade him to "shed blood". In the center, the French King, Philippe Auguste, faced the Emperor Otto [Otton].

The strategy of this invasion elaborated by John Lackland was to invade France from the south [diversion] and from the north [main attack]. At Bouvines, in the north, a frontal attack took place, without an overall plan, without manoeuvre, each group fighting on its own account. It was a typical feudal battle in which chivalry played a decisive role. During this battle, the French first used the crossbow invented under Louis-the-Fat. The main strength of both armies lay in the Cavalry³³, the striking force. The lack of cohesion of the Allied army, under three effective commands, compensated for the numerical inferiority of the French. This lack of cohesion in command seems to have been a determining factor. The French also received *before the battle* a psychological factor which gave them confidence : messengers came to inform them of the victory of La Roche-aux-Moines over the English. Philippe-Auguste

³² The Sergeants-at-Arms had just been created by King Philippe Auguste. Divided into small detachments throughout the country, their mission was to ensure the safety of the subjects and to enforce the decisions of justice. Like today. The Gendarmes also fought without the ranks of the French army (of which they were an integral part) at Agincourt, Hondschoote [1793], Friedland [1807], Danzig [1807], and the Chemin des Dames [1917].

³³ Foot soldiers followed by Saxon and Westphalian knights.

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was also informed of the Allied numbers and positions by his son-in-law who was fighting in the enemy ranks.

Summary of the action : On July 24, the French army arrived at Bouvines, coming from Péronne. The French had wasted precious time plundering the Flemish country. The Allies, warned of these movements, came to establish themselves firmly in front of them. The French were in a position of inferiority, *numerically* and by virtue of their *position*, and the Allies were so sure of their victory that they even prepared the ropes to tie up the French (aristocrat) prisoners for ransom. Philippe-Auguste therefore decided to retrace the path taken in the opposite direction to get out of this trap of swamps, and to reach the region of Lille where his Cavalry could be deployed. On 27 July, Philippe-Auguste gave the order to march towards Lille, while keeping the order of battle, knowing full well that the Allies would not fail to attack him. The Allied staff, believing that they were fleeing, gave the order to rush on the French by forced march, despite the suspicious hesitations of the Flemish Renaud de Dammartin. This is precisely what the Allied army did. Too sure of itself, it rushed forward with temerity and recklessness, without keeping the initial *order of battle*, and caught up with the French rearguard, which turned to fight alone, before being reinforced by the entire French Army which had recrossed the bridge of Bouvines over the Marcq River for this purpose. At noon precisely, the Allies, not respecting the usual Sunday Truce of God, began the attack. The attack was preceded by a general discharge of the French crossbowmen, comparable to modern artillery preparations. Then the French right wing [Brother Guérin] opened the battle. Guérin sent his mounted sergeants and his foot soldiers of the communes against the Flemish knights. Full of contempt for these peasants, the knights waited for them with firm feet, contenting themselves with disemboweling the horses of the French when they came too close to their long lances. The French attack failed. Delivered from this contemptible plebs, the Flemish knights rushed with ardor against the French knights who came in third place. But the fight turned to the advantage of the French, when the Count of Saint-Pol, followed by his best horsemen, launched furious assaults in both directions through the line of Flemish knights. The melee became very confused. Finally, after three hours of

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bloody fighting, Ferrand of Flanders was captured by the French and the Flemish troops disbanded.

In the centre, the fight was delayed, as it was necessary to wait for the return of the contingents from the communes that had already crossed the Marcq River. After a general discharge of the crossbowmen, the battle was more confusing there than elsewhere. The German infantrymen, armed with stakes, pikes and cutlasses, advanced in close ranks against the French Communiers³⁴, who were three times less numerous. In shock, the French center was smashed. Otto rushed into it with his knights, followed by the German infantrymen, in order to reach the King of France. It was then that the French knights of Guillaume des Barres charged in their turn, threw the ranks of the German infantry into disorder and began to try to seize Otto. Meanwhile, the German infantrymen reformed themselves into order and managed to continue their advance towards the King of France who found himself surrounded, dismounted and hit. Informed, Guillaume des Barres let Otto go and rushed to the aid of his king, raised him up and put him back in the saddle. Humiliated at having been dismounted and hit by commoner peasants of the communes, the King of France flew into a violent rage and made a frightful carnage of the German infantrymen. As for Otto, he managed to run away, escaped from the battle, pursued by French knights. He arrived safely at Valenciennes while his troops continued to fight bravely.

On the French left wing, commanded by Bishop Philippe, the battle remained for a long time an indecisive melee. The numerous French assaults were breaking down against the English of Salisbury. At last Philippe, armed with his mace, rushed upon Salisbury and struck him a tremendous blow on the helmet. William Longsword of Salisbury³⁵ collapsed and was taken prisoner by the French. Seeing this, the English troops gave way and fled across the plain. Fortunately, the Allied Right Wing held out despite the departure of the English, thanks to Renaud de Dammartin, Count of Boulogne, who had arranged his 700 Brabant

³⁴ Bourgeois militia of the communes.

³⁵ William Longsword, 3rd Earl of Salisbury was a bastard son of Henry II Plantagenet, King of England. A very active English baron, he obtained all the honours of the King of England John Lackland [or Landless], but abandoned his cause as soon as the latter was challenged, after the battle of Bouvines, to rally to Prince Louis of France, whom he also abandoned when the barons gathered around the new King of England, the son of John Lackland, Henry III.

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infantry, bristling with pikes, in a double circular line. In the centre of this living circle, which at times opened like a gigantic globule or blood cell, the Flemish knights launched fierce assaults against the French left wing. The French cavalry of the Bishop of Beauvais incessantly assaulted the Flemish *hedgehog of spears* without being able to shake it. With the forces made available by the dispersal of the English contingent, and of Ferrand's Flemish left wing, Philippe Auguste launched an assault on Renaud de Dammartin, the lines of whom were finally breached.

Evening was falling. The battle of Bouvines was over. Only a few units of brave Brabançons refused to surrender and were needlessly exterminated by the French Cavalry.

Casualties : *The French lost 15,000 killed, including 1,000 knights and men-at-arms *The Anglo-Allies had 25,000 killed and 9,500 prisoners.

As a result of this Anglo-German defeat , this battle had a universal significance for the three great nations that had participated in it. A decisive victory for the French, it put a momentary end to English hopes of recovering their continental possessions. The battle of Bouvines was so decisive that no country dared to confront Philippe-Auguste. This battle led to the strengthening of the French King's position in relation to his vassals in France itself. This was the beginning of excessive centralization and "absolute monarchy." In England, the defeat of Bouvines and the crushing taxes it entailed provoked a revolt by exasperated English barons against their King John. Not only did the barons wrest from him the *Magna Carta*, which weakened his power in favor of the Church and the High Nobility³⁶, but they even wanted to depose this King who was deemed incapable. However, the foundations for the evolution of England into a constitutional state had just been laid. For the Holy Roman

³⁶ The Magna Carta or Grande Charte was signed by King John of England at Runnymede in 1215. The Encyclopædia Britannica states: "Although it was wrested from the king by his feudal barons in their own selfish interest, and was by no means intended to assert rights and liberties for all, several of its clauses, among them the famous Clause 39, which established that "no free man shall be detained or imprisoned... or exiled or destroyed in any way, except by the legal judgment of his peers or (and) by local law," expressed the idea of liberty and became the symbol of that liberty for centuries to come." Unfortunately, the kings of England learned to circumvent this rule with impunity, with the nobility and even more so with the common people.

Emperor, Otto IV of Brunswick, the consequences were even more serious and lasting. He was abandoned by his supporters, and Frederick II, the ally of the King of France, was able to have himself crowned emperor at Aix-la-Chapelle. These circumstances favored in Germany the independence of the High Nobility and the loosening of the feudal ties which maintained the unity of the Empire. This regional autonomy lasted until 1871 and for centuries protected France, England, and the rest of Europe from any real Germanic danger³⁷. This balkanization also prevented Germany from carving out for itself in the world the place that it would have had, had it been united and powerful. It was perhaps this balkanization that delayed until the 20th century the destruction of European world supremacy, by Germany's two World Wars. Rarely has defeat had such dramatic consequences on the future of a country and a civilization.

A truce was signed at Chinon³⁸ on 18 September 1214. "In his *Memoriale de prerogativa Romani imperii* ³⁹, written in 1289, a widely read treatise whose influence was remarkable, the Canon of Cologne, Alexander von Roes, set out a kind of sharing of responsibilities. In order that an order as judicious as it was indispensable might be respected, the

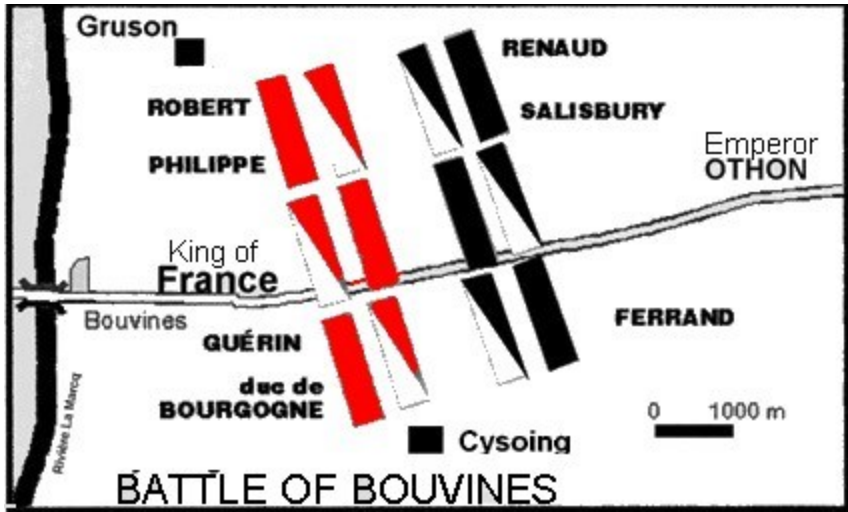
³⁷ Centuries have passed and France's interest has not changed one iota, as confirmed in the middle of the twentieth century, by the opinion of none other than Adolf Hitler, who commented on Germany's defeat at the end of the Great War known today as the First World War: "Thus, the fruit of this struggle [the Great War] against the development of German power was, politically, to establish France's hegemony on the continent. The military result: the strengthening of France in its role as the first major land power and the recognition of the United States as an equivalent power at sea. Economically: Britain's abandonment of huge spheres of interest to its allies. Just as Britain's traditional political goals seek and require a certain balkanization of Europe, France's seek and require a balkanization of Germany. France's desire has been—and remains—to prevent the formation of a unified power in Germany, to maintain a system of small German states united by balanced ties and without common leadership, and to occupy the left bank of the Rhine as a prerequisite for creating and safeguarding its hegemonic positions in Europe..." "The mortal enemy of the German people is and remains inexorably France." Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Verlag Frz. Eher Nachf G.M.B.H., Berlin, 1925; Volume 2 [The National Socialist Movement]; Chapter XIII [Germany's Post-War Alliance Policy]. This fragmentation of Germany was indeed vital for France, which in 1914 had only 38 million inhabitants—including 8 million non-naturalized foreigners who were not part of the compulsory conscription—in front of a German empire of 75 million inhabitants; and in 1939, France, which had laboriously risen to 39 million, had to face a Germany of 85 million inhabitants armed to the teeth.

³⁸ Not only did the king of England not recover his lost provinces, but he undertook to pay a heavy indemnity of 60,000 pounds gold. In 1220, the Truce of Chinon was extended for 4 years.

³⁹ Alexandre Roesius seu (de) von Roes, *Memoriale de prerogativa Imperii romani*, in Herbert Grundmann en Hermann Heupel (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Staatsschriften des späteren Mittelalters, dl. I-1, Stuttgart, 1958, pp.136-137.

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Romans, that is to say, the most ancient, had received as their mission the papacy (sacerdotium), the Germans or the French (Germani vel Franci), the youngest, the Empire (imperium), while the French or Gaulois were reserved, because of their great subtlety of mind, the study of the sciences⁴⁰ (studium)."



Battle of Bouvines

⁴⁰ Alfred Denoyelle, *From pulpit to battlefield. Genesis and effect of papal legitimations proper to the theocratic image around 1250. Het (z)elfbedrog van het imaginaire*, Louvain (Leuven), 1999, pp.127-128, with the necessary references.

Battle of Brémule.

Other names : Brémulle, Brenmule or even Brenneville.

Date of the action : 20 August 1119.

Location : The Normandy plain of Verclives, France. 49.32990, 1.39486

Conflict : War of English Succession, 1091-1106. French intervention.

Context : Of the three sons of William the Conqueror, the eldest Robert Curthose, who became Duke of Normandy, went on crusade to the Holy Land. William Rufus [Le Roux], the youngest, who had inherited the crown of England, was killed by a "lost arrow", and the youngest, Henry I Beauclerc, was able to have himself crowned king of England [1100] before the return of his brother Robert, who had been before him in the order of power. When the latter finally returned in haste, he found himself at odds with Henry I Beauclerc who also wanted to deprive him of the Province of Normandy that he had received in order to reunify all the patrimony. At the Battle of Tinchebray, on September 26, 1106, the two brothers clashed. Henry defeated his brother's army and imprisoned him until his death. In 1119, the King of France, Louis VI the Fat, wanted to intervene to break this union, between England and Normandy, strategically threatening for France. On the 20th of August 1119, the King of England heard mass at Noyon-sur-Andelle⁴¹, and marched upon the French army with his best troops, ignorant that the King of France had arrived at Les Andelys. Louis the Fat marched out of Andely with the French army, not knowing that his enemy was so near. He quickly made his way to the castle of Noyon-sur-Andelle, which belonged to the King of England, thinking that he would obtain the castle that very day thanks to a betrayal, but he came across the English at Brémule (Brenneville⁴²).

⁴¹ Today Charleval.

⁴² This fort was subsequently, in 1150, ceded to Louis the Younger, King of France, by Henry II Plantagenet, King of England.

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Louis the Fat engaged in battle despite the advice of Bouchard de Montmorency.

Leaders : *The King of England, Henry I, commanded the English army, along with his sons Richard, Robert, and William, nicknamed *the Ætheling*⁴³ by the English. *Louis VI the-Fat, king of France, commanded the French and the Normans of the party of Guillaume Cliton, son of Robert Curthose⁴⁴. Cliton was present in battle.

Troops : **Anglo-Norman* : 500 men-at-arms and infantry, i.e. *couteliers* [400 of the latter; there were no archers]⁴⁵. **French* : 400 knights.

Strategy or tactics : Henry I Beauclerc, King of England, dismounted 400 of his 500 cavalry and put them in a linear formation [in three lines]. The 100 cavalries attacked the enemy cavalry. The fight was fierce. There were no archers. But the sources seem confused : Orderic, Suger, Henry of Huntingdon, and the Chronicle of Hyde. Regarding the establishment of the French language in the colonization of England, the historian Azimov writes: The French aristocracy of Normandy, although their ancestors can be traced back to the Vikings, of whom it was only five generations away, had fully adopted the French language and culture. In the eyes of the English of the time, they were French... The Franco-Normans, on the other hand, faced the sullen-looking⁴⁶ Anglo-Saxons, whose language seemed to them most barbarous, and they could not help adopting an arrogance towards them that made them very unpopular. When two peoples cannot understand their language, there is no chance that they will address each other with sweet words⁴⁷. William himself tried to learn

⁴³ "The Prince Royal," a nickname given to the Saxon kings who had reigned before the French period; such was Edgar, the former heir to the crown, who had fought so hard against William the Bastard.

⁴⁴ Today we would say "Courtecuisse" ("shorty", because he was small). Henry kept him in captivity in England.

⁴⁵ The name *coutelier* was a soldier equipped with a long knife [couteau] or short sword called a *coustille*. The blade of his weapon could easily slip between the metal pieces of an armor.

⁴⁶ *Sullen* because they are frustrated at being treated as slaves by their conquerors. Azimov used this image several times. The Celts, whom they themselves had invaded a little earlier, had had to flee England.

⁴⁷ "soft words".

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the Saxon language..., but in this he was exceptional. William's immediate successors, and his nobility in general, refused to learn Old English. French became the official language of the court, laws, government, literature, and good manners. English was left [as a patois] to the peasant serfs⁴⁸. In order to show the importance of the action of the clergy and religion in the field of colonial, cultural and linguistic domination, Isaac Azimov writes: "If the clergy had been allowed to remain Saxon, they would have kept Saxon culture alive for centuries and ultimately would have come to master the French. There are many examples⁴⁹ in history: when the Germans (the Franks) invaded the western provinces of the Roman Empire, the clergy of those provinces remained Roman, and in the end, it was the Germans who found themselves assimilated and learned to speak the Latin languages. The Vikings who settled in Normandy were Frenchified⁵⁰ because they were Christianized first, and the clergy were French. So, William decided to Frenchify the English clergy.... As soon as Stigand, the Anglo-Saxon Archbishop of Canterbury, was deposed by William, in 1070, with papal permission from the Vatican, the new king immediately replaced him with Lanfranc, the very diplomatic Frenchman, who then became the 34th Archbishop of Canterbury... Another Frenchman, Thomas de Bayeux, was appointed Archbishop of York." In a pyramidal hierarchy, it is enough to change or enslave the top for the rest to submit obediently.

Summary of the action : Guillaume de Crespigny⁵¹, a French from Normandy knight of Cliton's party, charged first, with 80 men-at-arms. He pushed on to the King of England and had just enough time to thrust him on the head that would have split his skull had it not been for the mail

⁴⁸ Asimov, Isaac, *The Shaping of England*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston [USA] 1969. Page 162. French remained official for three centuries.

⁴⁹ The example that most affected Canadians was the replacement of French-speaking priests in Ontario by English-speaking Irish, in order to bring about the assimilation of French-speaking minorities. For more on this topic, see the chapter *When the Ku Klux Klan persecuted les Canadiens-français*, *Les Grands Dossiers criminels du Canada*, same author, Éditions Pierre Tisseyre, Montreal, 1990, volume 1, page 181.

⁵⁰ They numbered 4 or 5,000 at the outset in 911, out of a French regional population of nearly 100,000. The mixing began immediately. The Franco-Normans represented only a tiny minority in William the Bastard's army (1066). The French built 15 cathedrals and over 1,000 castles in England.

⁵¹ Often called Crispin by the English.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

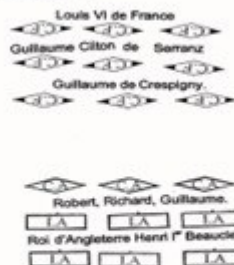
helmet, before being knocked down and captured with all his men. The French knights then charged with great impetuosity and broke through the Anglo-Norman lines, but Henry's soldiers pulled themselves together, closed ranks, and succeeded in reforming themselves in front of the French line, which the force of his charge had thrown into disorder. Seeing his knights give way, Louis the-Fat was advised to retreat in order to avoid capture. He changed horses so as not to be recognized and fled at full speed, abandoning his standard and 140 of his knights. He ended up getting lost in the forest and it was a local peasant who took him back to the Andelys. Henry sent his horse back to him a few days later.

Casualties : Of the 900 knights that the two armies totaled, only three were killed because they were covered in armor. Moreover, each one applied himself to capture without killing, because of the brotherhood of arms of the Order of Chivalry and the possible ransoms. In addition, on the Franco-Norman side, 140 knights were captured. King Louis the-Fat lost his standard.

As a consequence of this Franco-Norman defeat: In 1120, the Treaty of Gisors between France and England brought L'Andély into the domain of the Archbishop of Rouen, that is to say, of England.

BATTLE of BRENNEVILLE

20 août 1119



I.F. Infanterie franco-normande et archers.
C.F. Cavalerie franco-normande (chevaliers et hommes d'armes).
I.A. Infanterie anglo-normande et archers.
C.A. Cavalerie anglo-normande (chevaliers et hommes d'armes).

Siege of Bridport.

Date of the action : 1067

Location : Dorset, England, 50°73'N, 02°75'E

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification of insurgent sectors. Campaign of 1067.

Background : As Dorset was plagued by sedition fomented by English patriots opposed to the French domination, Dorchester, an old Roman town and the capital of Shire, was besieged, stormed by the French and almost completely destroyed. Only a few houses were spared, as evidenced by the Domesday Book Register. Bridport was also besieged.

Numbers engaged : Nothing is known about this siege, which was probably carried out, without any ruse of war, by simple escalation.

Strategy or tactics : Assault by escalation (presumably). Tactics of terror by destruction, plunder and confiscation.

As a result of this English loss, the city was totally ravaged by the French in retaliation. In that year⁵² not a single house could pay the slightest tax at the time this cadastral register was drawn up.

Ruins of the Bridport Castle



⁵² According to the Domesday Book (spelled Domesday Book), the first Great Survey or cadastre of England established by the French to legalize the real estate holdings of new French colonists. A true Official Journal, the writings of this cadastre were irrevocable (Domesday Book = Register of the Last Judgment).

Siege of Cambridge.

Another name : a town then called Grantbridge or Grand-bridge by the French.

Date of the action : 1068

Location: a city in England located 80 km north of London. 52°19'N, 00°12'W

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1068.

Background : After the defeat at the Humber River, the Anglo-Welsh army was again defeated before York and then the French attacked Cambridge, a city of considerable importance with its 400 houses, according to the Domesday Book.

Leaders in attendance *William the Bastard, known as "The Conqueror", commanded the French forces.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown French forces but supported by English auxiliary troops.

Strategy or tactics : Siege with, probably, opening a breach using throwing machines, and mines. Then assault by climbing.

Summary of the action : No details of the siege and assault have come down to us. But resistance must have been strong in this county since the confiscations of land belonging to the English and the redistribution to French colonists were very important.

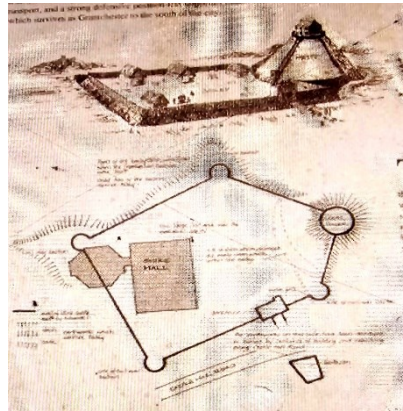
Casualties : Unknown.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Consequence of this English defeat : The French built a castle, the construction of which resulted in the destruction of 27 houses; their occupants had to move across the river. The French Picot was appointed sheriff of the County⁵³. The French built over 1,000 castles in England to watch the English population.

Cambridge Castle

Motte & bailey, side view and birdview



The motte today.

⁵³ He greatly oppressed the English. Picot de Lascelles, Sheriff of Cambridgeshire. Born in La Selle in Northern France. Picot rose from obscurity to become Sheriff of Cambridgeshire.^[1] He treated Cambridge (then known as Cantebrigge or Grentebribe) as his own, knocking down 27 houses to build Cambridge Castle (probably initially of wood), confiscating land, building mills, seizing goods and raising taxes. The Abbot of Ely described him as "A hungry lion, a ravening wolf, a cunning fox, a dirty pig and an impudent dog". Lascelles comes from the place called 'La Selle' in the French département of Orne, in northern France, and derives from the Olde French.

Siege of Canterbury.

Other name : Cantorbéry.

Date of the action : 29 October 1066.

Location : Coordinates: 51°28'N and 01°08'E. This town is located 25km to the N.W. of Dover, on the road to London. The town's cathedral had become a center of pilgrimage since the local bishop (Thomas Becket) was murdered there during vespers by order of the King.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Campaign of 1066.

Background : In 1066, on the death of Edward the Confessor, Harold Godwinson became King of England. But William the Bastard, Duke of Normandy claimed that Harold Godwinson had promised him the crown of England when he was shipwrecked on the French coast. Consequently, to enforce this "promise" (true or false), William invaded England, destroyed the English army at Hastings, and then marched up to London. After taking Dover, he came to lay siege to Canterbury, a city located on the Roman road "Via Watlinga"⁵⁴ from Dover to London.

Leaders in attendance *William the Bastard, Duke of Normandy, commanded the French army.

Troops engaged *About 7,000 men on the French side. *The strength of the English garrison is not known.

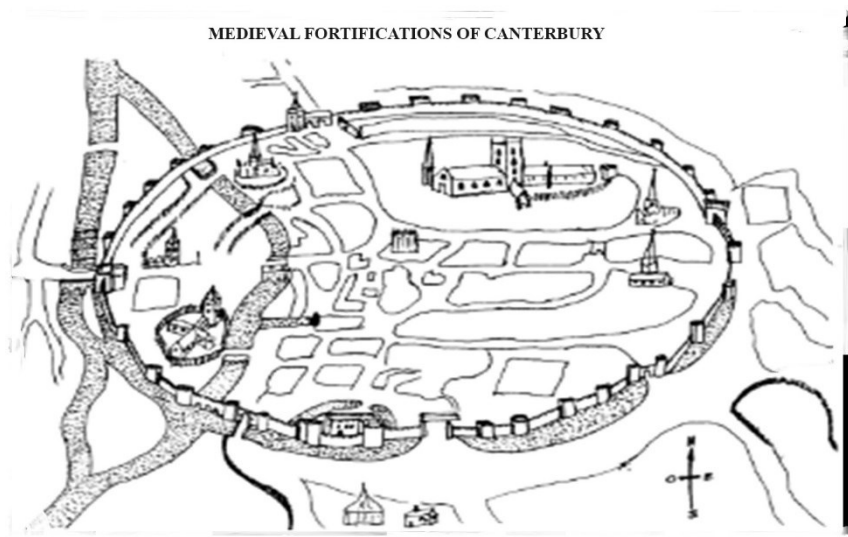
Strategy or tactics : Fear, caused by the terrible reprisals that any resistance entailed, eventually prompted the English garrison to surrender unconditionally.

⁵⁴ Now called *Watling Street* between London and Birmingham.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Summary of the action : Nothing is known from the siege itself. Guillaume fell ill and had to stay in bed for a month.

As a consequence of this English capitulation , William gradually subdued his new kingdom.



Siege of Château-Gaillard.

Date of the action : August 1203 - March 6th, 1204.

Location : Les Andelys, France, on the banks of the Seine River. 45°97'; 5°29'

Conflict : Feudal conflict between the kings of France and England. Spring Offensive of 1203.

Background : In 1199, John Lackland [Jean-sans-Terre] became King of England on the death of his brother Richard the Lionheart⁵⁵. The new king married in 1200 with considerable haste. The bride was a 13-year-old girl named Isabelle, heiress to the county of Angoulême, a strategic region located in the north of Aquitaine⁵⁶. The lands she brought were so important to John that he repudiated his own wife by having her marriage annulled, to marry this little girl with whom he had himself crowned King of England. But it turned out that the teenager was already promised⁵⁷ to a member of a powerful French feudal family who did not appreciate the evasion, and appealed to the arbitration of Philippe II of France, the overlord (the suzerain). As King of England John was independent, but as Duke of Anjou, Normandy, Aquitaine and elsewhere, he was the vassal of the King of France. Philippe II, very happy with the windfall, summoned John to appear before him to discuss the problem and submit it to his Royal Justice. The King of France knew full well that his dignity as King of England would forbid him this humiliation, but it

⁵⁵ After having imprisoned and then assassinated the direct pretender to the throne of England, Arthur I of Brittany; thus avoided, as a consequence, that province from becoming English.

⁵⁶ Angoumois is the junction between Poitou and Guyenne. This piece of the puzzle was therefore crucial, and there was enough to get married in a hurry, no matter how beautiful the bride.

⁵⁷ If not engaged.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

was part of his Machiavellian plan⁵⁸; he would be able to legitimately seize his continental lands from him. He hastened to do when John haughtily refused. But it was not enough to confiscate the land *in abstracto*, it was necessary to conquer the strongholds with assault ladders. The war resumed. It was then that the King of England realized that some of his continental vassals refused⁵⁹ to make war on the King of France whom they feared. When, in 1203, his mother Eleanor of Aquitaine, still alive, was besieged in her castle of Mirabeau, a few miles from Angers, by her nephew Arthur, Duke of Brittany, John rushed to her assistance, and, in the battle that followed, seized the person of Arthur, who was shut up at Rouen. The young adolescent⁶⁰ was never seen alive again. John murdered him. He was accused of this before public opinion and it ruined his case, because he found nothing convincing in his defense⁶¹. The archbishop of Brittany even brought against him public accusations of assassination. The King of France, of course, did his best to spread the news, which was embellished with malicious rumours. Vassals abandoned him. Then, as a divine punishment, the fortress of Château-Gaillard, "the impregnable", was taken by the French. The French province of Normandy was penetrated, and its very capital, Rouen, besieged. By his total lack of judgment, John had succeeded in destroying the powerful Anglo-Angevin empire which had made the kings of France tremble for half a century. To the great despair of the English, even their dear province of Normandy left after more than three centuries of union with their King-Duke, the King of England. This fat and green Normandy that his⁶² ancestor

⁵⁸ He knew the weakness of character and the intellectual level of this king since he had already advised him to make him commit his first mistakes as a prince.

⁵⁹ Or dragged their feet. Everyone knew Jean-sans-Terre[John Lackland or Landless], at least by reputation. He was known to be weak in character and above all in intellect.

⁶⁰ Barely 16 years old.

⁶¹ His father, who had murdered Saint Thomas Becket, had succeeded in convincing public opinion of his innocence by submitting to various penances, including the whip. Jean probably didn't have the heart for that.

⁶² Seven times great-grandfather was Rollo or Hrolf the Ganger, Rollo the Bandleader.

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had received from France and that his great-great-grandfather⁶³ had bequeathed to him. Eleanor d'Aquitaine finally died in 1204, at the age of 82. It was her marriage to Henry II, fifty years earlier, that had spawned *the Anglo-Angevin Empire*, and the queen had unfortunately lived just long enough to see its ruin. The reaction was extreme in England. The English Nobility, the Clergy and the upper bourgeoisie of London took advantage of this to force King John to grant them the **Magna Carta**, which limited some of his powers. But he was reluctant to sign. It was then necessary for the pope to excommunicate John and for his people to refuse to obey him to force him to agree relinquishing a fraction of his power.

The Magna Carta was finally signed on 15 June 1215 at Runnymede⁶⁴. The very first clause protected the Church, which wanted to be independent of the King: "The Church of England shall be free, and shall enjoy inviolable rights and liberties⁶⁵." Another clause favored the great Bourgeois of London : "The City of London will recover its ancient franchises and its free octroi..." Another specified: "No sheriff... may confiscate the horses or carts of any free man⁶⁶ for transport, except with the consent of the said free man." The population being serfs, the *free men* represented the nobility and the rich bourgeoisie. But over the centuries, the expression ended up designating all Englishmen, whoever they were, without changing the text.

Leaders in charge : *The King of France, Philip Auguste, commanded the attacking French army. *The Constable of Chester, Roger de Lacy, (1170-1211) led the English garrison.

Troops engaged : The French had about 8,000 men.

⁶³ William the Conqueror.

⁶⁴ On the southern edge of today's London.

⁶⁵ There was no talk of duties, obligations or constraints.

⁶⁶ Peasants were serfs. They were not free men.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Strategy or tactics : The capture of this fortress is one of the military achievements of the Middle Ages. Before attacking this castle, the King Philippe II sent William des Roches to war in Maine, Anjou and Poitou, as a strategic diversion, in order to prevent the arrival of English reinforcements at Château-Gaillard. Standing on the cliff, on the banks of the river, the fortress controlled direct access to the barrier⁶⁷, and to the road that ran along the right bank. The fortress consisted of three distinct parts, connected to each other by walls. The first, at the very top of the rocks. The second almost opposite the first, on an island connected by two wooden bridges to the banks of the Seine, the course of which was barred by a pier (the Barrier or boom). The third was a sort of entrenched camp, surrounded on one side by the river, on the other by a pond, and defended moreover by towers of stone and wood. Finally, there were two small forts, detached outposts, one (called *Cléry*) on the plateau overlooking the promontory of the rock, and the other on an island about 400 m up-stream, called *Boutavant*.

Summary of the action : Three series of operations allowed the French to capture the fortress:

1] In August and September, the French cleared the approaches by attacking the outposts one after the other: the *Fort de Boutavant*, the *Château de Lihons*, the *Château de Gournay*, the *Château d'Argueil* and the *Château de La Ferté*. The French then attacked and stormed the fortified village of *Petit Andély*, allowing them to reach the banks of the Seine River.

2] At this point, under a hail of projectiles, the French attacked the solid boom that prevented them from receiving supplies by water. When it was broken, a boat pontoon was built to cross the river: large boats were scuttled next to each other and the bridge built on this foundation. Two log towers were erected on ships to protect the bridge, and to attack the fortress from higher positions. The French troops were finally able to cross the river, settle on the right bank and begin the siege properly. Seeing himself surrounded and threatened with starvation, the Constable of Chester attempted a surprise sortie (attack from the fortress) in order to free himself and cut the blocus. Under cover of night, the operation

⁶⁷ A boom, a row of stakes, stuck across the river.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

obtained the beginning of success. Surprised, the French disbanded, but Guillaume des Barres managed to rally them. The fight resumed. To unmask the English who had infiltrated the French ranks, the soldiers lit torches, and then engaged in fierce hand-to-hand combat. Finally, the English retreated. At dawn, there was a new alert: English ships were arriving as reinforcements. Immediately crossbow bolts⁶⁸, firepots⁶⁹, and rocks fell upon them, while the French troops on the ground rushed to the assault of outposts. The fight was most bloody. In the end, the surviving English had to retreat. After this new victory, the French had only a palisade between them and the fortress, which they managed to burn thanks to the ingenuity of a soldier named Goulet. He wrapped watertight boxes full of burning coals around his body, dived in, and on the other side poured the contents of the boxes onto the fences, which caught fire. 3] The French could now undertake the direct blockade of the fortress. They first dug a double ditch of circumvallation and countervallation through the slopes of the hills and valleys. Between these two ditches, 15 towers were erected at intervals. The English constable then decided to get rid of useless mouths. The wounded, the sick, the infirm and the elderly were ruthlessly driven away. As the French refused them the right of passage, they wandered for a long time in this *no man's land*, a prey to famine⁷⁰.

The blockade continued throughout the winter. No English reinforcements attempted to break through the circumvallation trench lines. The garrison felt totally abandoned. In March, the King of France decided to put an end to it. He had new towers erected, very high, which reached the level of the keep and from which the French archers could reach the English soldiers. In addition, a daring French "commando" managed to occupy one of the towers of the fortress by climbing ladders at night or by clinging to the roughness of the rocks and walls. Seeing the danger, the English chief had this part of the fortress burned, but, taking shelter behind a shield, the "commando" managed to get through the flames, and one of them, Bogis, reached one of the windows of the

⁶⁸ Four-sided arrows.

⁶⁹ Pots filled with boiling pitch.

⁷⁰ Until the day when they were able to see the king of France and beg him. The expression "commando" is anachronistic but very convenient here.

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chapel. From there, he held out a rope to his comrades, hoisted them up one after the other, and, when there were enough of them, they broke down the doors and threw themselves on the occupants, who took refuge in the citadel. When the fire had subsided, Bogis and his "commando" reached the drawbridge and lowered it. At the same time, an enormous catapult came into action and made a large breach in the walls. The assault troops still outside rushed through these two openings and killed or captured all the surviving English troops.

Casualties : The entire English garrison was massacred or taken prisoner.

As a consequence of this English defeat , the lock of the English province of Normandy had been broken.



Château-Gaillard, as it was in the XIIIth century, an English fortress reputedly impregnable.
Casemates under the fortress of Château-Gaillard

Siege of Cherbourg.

Date of the action : first half of November 1295.

Location : French port north of the Cotentin peninsula in the province of Normandy (France) ; 49°64'; 01°61'.

Conflict : Feudal war between the kings of France and England, one being, just for his personal continental possessions, the vassal of the other.



Castle of Cherbourg

Context : To avenge the sack of Dover, an English fleet set sail from Yarmouth and fell upon Cherbourg.

Strategy or tactics : In this time, the city itself was not fortified. It was therefore set on fire. But the castle resisted because the royal commissioners in charge of inspecting the strongholds had put it in a state of defense by razing the surrounding houses. It was the blind law of retaliation (an eye for an eye) that struck the coasts of the two countries without bringing anything decisive to this conflict, except the impotent hatred of the populations.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Summary of the action : A landing was made near Cherbourg. But the castle resisted. The English took revenge for this failure by plundering the Abbey du Vœu ; they burned the city and carried off an old abbot, who was thrown into the hold. They then ravaged the Cotentin. Another English fleet from Portsmouth entered the Zwyn (in Flanders). Finding no Frenchmen there, they captured 15 Spanish ships at Dammes. This, to make their shipping expedition profitable.

Casualties : Unknown.

As a consequence of this English failure to take the fortress, the city of Cherbourg was for the first time surrounded by a fortified enclosure⁷¹.



⁷¹ The Abbey of the Vow was again plundered by the English in 1326.

Siege of Chester.

Date of the Action : 1070.

Location : City in England located 250 km NW of London, on the border between England and Wales. 53°19', 02°89'

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1070.

Background : In February 1070, the French Army left York, where it had wintered, and marched across the Pennine Mountains to Chester, which was not yet pacified.

Leaders in attendance *William *the Bastard*, now known among the French as *the Conqueror*, commanded the French army.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown. Some regiments were made up of English auxiliary troops under French command.

Strategy or tactics : William the Bastard decided on this winter campaign, which was unprecedented, as all military operations used to cease during the off-season (wintering).

Summary of the action : We do not know if the city capitulated without a fight or if it had to be stormed. We only know that the Chester area was ravaged by the French, as were the neighbouring counties.

Casualties : This last winter of great insurrection caused, according to some estimates, 100,000 deaths among the insurgent civilian population.

As a result of this English defeat , a fortress was built in Chester by the French to watch over the population, another in Stafford. This area was

Naval battles of the Five Islands.

Other name : Battle of South Foreland.

Date of the action : 24 August 1217.

Location : Cape South Foreland is located a few kilometres N.E. of Dover, at 51°15' and 01°40'

Conflict : English Civil War, or War of the English Succession, 1216 - 1217. French participation.

Context : The English barons, exasperated with their King John the Landless, had sent a deputation to Prince Louis of France to offer him the throne of England. But King John the Landless died on October 12, 1216, and some of the English barons no longer wanted Louis of France. They preferred Henry [III], son of John the Landless. The two factions met at Lincoln for a final battle that went badly for the Franco-English side. Defeated at Lincoln, Louis of France asked for reinforcements in France.

Leaders in attendance *The Anglo-Poitou squadron was led by Hubert de Bourg [de Burgh], governor of Dover, and Philippe d'Aubigné (or d'Aubigny, or Daubeney), governor of Jersey. *The French squadron was commanded by the pirate Eustache Le Moine, hated by the English for his destructive raids on English cities. His defeat would cost him his life.

Forces *Anglo-Poitevins⁷³ : 18 warships and about twenty armed smaller boats. *Franco-English: 10 warships escorted 70 small troop transports and logistical supply vessels. The French warships were also heavily laden of men and horses.

⁷³ Poitou had just been conquered by the French, but most of the Poitevin ships were still part of the English fleet.

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Strategy or tactics : Hubert de Bourg, who commanded the Anglo-Poitou squadron, invented on this occasion a naval tactic that was to become the rule until the end of the sailing navy : to try to win the wind over the enemy in order to keep the initiative and to fall on the adversary at the moment while the latter, under-winded, was forced to suffer. On this occasion, it was only a question of being able *to blind* the French with quicklime; but the idea was found. Sailors armed with quicklime sacks were installed in the masts and yardarms. At the moment of boarding, they blinded the French by throwing handfuls of lime into the wind. Another tactical innovation on the part of Hubert de Bourg was the idea of posting Philippe d'Aubigné's archers in the masts, yardarms, and on the bridges.

Summary of the action : On the night of 23 to 24 August 1217, 70 small transports of troops and logistical supplies left Calais, escorted by 10 warships commanded by the pirate Eustache Le Moine. The breeze blew from the S.S.E. Suddenly the Anglo-Poitou squadron appeared, which seemed to want to avoid combat in spite of the jeers of the French. It sailed eastwards and therefore let the French squadron pass; then, when the wind was on her side, they veereded lof for lof and launched themselves to board the French. In fact, Hubert de Bourg wanted to win the wind over the French ; a tactic still unknown but intended in this specific case to send quicklime into the eyes of the French at the critical moment of the collision. The French ships, overloaded with men, horses, and supplies, were extremely low, sunk beyond the waterline and difficult to handle. At the signal, therefore, the Anglo-Poitevin ships threw themselves on the French, and, just before the boarding, a cloud of quicklime fell from the masts and the wind threw it on the French combatants, whose eyes were cruelly burned, while the archers and crossbowmen mowed down the French bridges. It was Renaud Païen, a sergeant from Guernsey, who first boarded the French flagship. Lime was a real incapacitator as effective as modern self-defense bombs. As soon as the French were totally blinded, the Anglo-Poitevins threw themselves on board and began to massacre them with daggers, pikes and axes. Some ships with a rather rigid bow rammed the troop transports which immediately heeled. The Anglo-Poitevins then jumped almost unopposed on the French ships, cut

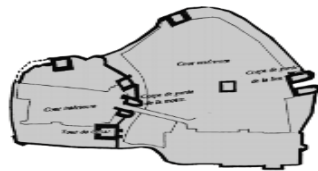
French English battles in the early Middle Ages

the ropes with the boarding axe, and the sails fell on the survivors "caught in the net like birds". It was an immense massacre; the bridges were covered in blood and shredded bodies. Eustache's flagship, so overloaded that they were too low to use his trebuchet, was assaulted and taken by 4 or 5 Poitevin ships. They wanted the pirate's head.

Losses *An English abbot estimated the French losses at 125 knights, 33 crossbowmen, 146 mounted sergeants and 833 foot-sergeants⁷⁴. *The Anglo-Poitevin losses are unknown.

Consequence of this Franco-English defeat: This defeat pushed Prince Louis of France and his English party to abandon the Louis' claims to the throne of England. Louis signed peace on September 11th. *He agreed to abandon not only his candidacy for the English throne, but also his conquests and in particular the Channel Islands taken from the English.* The occupation of England had lasted 16 months. As the participation of the Poitevins in the English ranks was very high, and as the loyalty of this continental province to France left much to be desired since the too recent French conquest of Philippe-Auguste, Louis [VIII] of France decided to reconquer Poitou.

Structure of Chester Castle, England.
A type of French motte and bailey (lice) castle. This type of fortification was adopted in England's flat terrain.



⁷⁴ This figure is probably exaggerated because it would have represented all the French reinforcements. According to the custom of the time, knights were saved for ransom, and all others were immediately massacred or drowned. But the exaggeration in the figures shows the enthusiasm of the English loyalists for this victory. Scarcely fifteen French ships were able to return in disorder to Calais. Knowing that he was wanted for all his misdeeds in England, the pirate Eustace disguised himself, was recognized; he tried in vain to buy his freedom, and was finally beheaded. His head was paraded through all the English ports he had devastated during his terrible career.

Siege of the fortress of Croix-Saint-Leufroy.

Date of the Action : 1136.

Location : France, département of Eure, Gaillon canton. On the Eure River, 24 m above sea level. It was in this castle that the lords conspiring against Henry I of England had met in 1123 to lay the foundations of the so-called *Croix-Saint-Leufroy Conspiracy*, encouraged by the King of France and intended to separate Normandy from England. 49°11'; 1°24'

Conflict : War of the Succession of Henry I of England.

Background : Queen Matilde⁷⁵, wife of Henry I of England, died in 1118, leaving two children: a daughter [Matilda] who had been married at the age of 12 [in 1114] to Henry V, Emperor of the Germanic Holy Roman Empire. The other was a son, William, Henry's only son and, therefore, his idol. Another possible pretender to the crown was William Clito, son of Robert Curthose who had renounced the crown in exchange for a monetary indemnity⁷⁶. In November 1120, Henry and his family returned to England from Normandy, where the King of England had just made war on Fulk V, Count of Anjou⁷⁷. Henri commanded one ship and his heir Guillaume⁷⁸ (17 years old) the other, called La BLANCHE-NEF. Very happy with the turn of events, young Guillaume had distributed triple rations of alcohol to the crew. As a result, the ship was delayed until nightfall. When it finally weighed anchor, in total darkness, it immediately went to disembowel itself on the rocks. "There was only one

⁷⁵ Not to be confused with Henry's mother, Flemish by origin [i.e. the wife of William the Conqueror], who had made this name fashionable, so much so that Henry's wife abandoned her Saxon name of Edith to adopt the more French one at the time of Matilde. Maud is the diminutive of Matilde.

⁷⁶ In fact, it wasn't the same deal as Jacob buying Esau's birthright for a mere plate of lentils, but Clito had to accept this money and renunciation, willingly or by force, in order not to die.

⁷⁷ Fulk was helped by William Clito, frustrated that he was not on the list of pretenders, because his father had been forced to renounce the throne.

⁷⁸ Whom some called the Ætheling [*the prince*] in order to "Saxonize" him a little.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

survivor, and it was not the prince⁷⁹." No one dared to announce this horrible drama to the King for three days. It was terrible; he fainted and lost for good the subtle smile which had embellished his face since his accession to the throne after the mysterious accident during which his brother had been killed by a "*stray arrow*." But it was necessary to think of the succession; there were two other possibilities; Adèle, daughter of William the Conqueror and married to William of Blois, had a son named Étienne⁸⁰. The other was Matilda, daughter of Henry. She was free and childless and could therefore hope. Azimov writes about her: "if she had still been married to the Holy Roman Emperor and had had children from him, German in language and culture, there is no doubt that *she could not* have been accepted as Queen of England. But the Emperor had died in 1125 without an heir." In 1136, Roger de Tosny of the pro-French party besieged this castle of Croix-Saint-Leufroy, belonging to the King of England, which Earl Galéran de Meulan had built in this location in 1120.

Troops engaged : A few hundred men.

Strategy or tactics : Probably assaulted by escalation.

Summary of the action : The only known details are the following : the abbey of this locality was violated, and the monks' village burned. But the castle was not taken.

The consequence of this French setback : Insignificant, except for the direct victims of this violence.



⁷⁹ Raconte l'historien américain Isaac Asimov, *The Shaping of England*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston [USA] 1969. Page 194.

⁸⁰ Stephen or Steven for the English.

Naval Battle of Damme.

Date of the Action : 1213.

Location : Damme or Dam, a seaport located 8 km from Bruges on the Bruges Canal that runs from this city to Moerkerke. In the thirteenth century, Damme stretched along the edge of a veritable arm of the sea (a fjord) that is now drained by polders. 51°25'N; 3°27'O

Conflict : Campaign in Flanders by Philip II of France. English intervention.

Context : In January 1213, the Pope banished England from Christianity by excommunication. Very happy, Philip of France prepared in his capacity as overlord suzerain of the King of England, John the Landless, to go and take away his crown "in the name of the Pope" to award it "to someone who would be worthy of it". He decided to give the crown to Prince Louis of France, who retained his rights to the throne of France. It was an incredible bargain! Philip Augustus [Philippe Auguste] therefore assembled an army and a transport fleet which concentrated at Boulogne on 8 May 1213. But a papal legate arrived, forbidding the invasion because John had submitted *in extremis*. On May 22, 1213, Philippe Auguste, very disappointed, decided to use this now useless army against Flanders, because the Earl of Flanders, Ferrand, had refused to participate in the expedition against John the Landless. He had, on the contrary, signed a secret treaty of mutual aid with England. Philippe sent his transport fleet to Damme and began to conquer the Flemish cities. Flanders sought the help of its ally, John the Landless, who dispatched the English fleet to Damme.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

English Commanders *The *English fleet* was commanded by William Longue-épée (Longsword) de Salisbury, assisted by Renaud de Dammar-tin⁸¹ and Hugues de Boves. **French*: Robert de Poissy.

Forces involved **French* transport fleet consisted of 1,700 ships and boats of all sizes, manned by fishermen and merchant sailors. *The *English* fleet consisted of 500 ships.

Strategy or tactics: *Surprise* was certainly the main factor in this victory, since most of the French crews were on land. The 1,700 French transports of all tonnage were anchored in the port of Damme ; 400 transports had to be left outside the port, which was too small.

Summary of the action : When Salisbury appeared unexpectedly in front of Damme, he found the French ships at anchor. The crews had gone ashore. Ships and boats were anchored in the harbor and along the coast. A hundred of them, had been pulled ashore on the beaches. Salisbury and his fleet took in tow 300 empty boats anchored outside the harbor, and set fire to others they could not tow, after carefully plundering them. Then the English ships that served as protection, which, as a result, did not tow anything, entered the port to attack the ships at anchor to which the French crews began to flock to re-embark. They were returning from the surrounding area where they were plundering some Flemish villages. Despite their very incomplete crews, the French ships held the English ships in check, so much so that the English had to land and line up in battle on either side of the port to take the French ships in a pincer movement. Attacked from all sides, the French under Robert de Poissy fought back causing heavy losses to the English. Finally, resistance gradually ceased in the port.

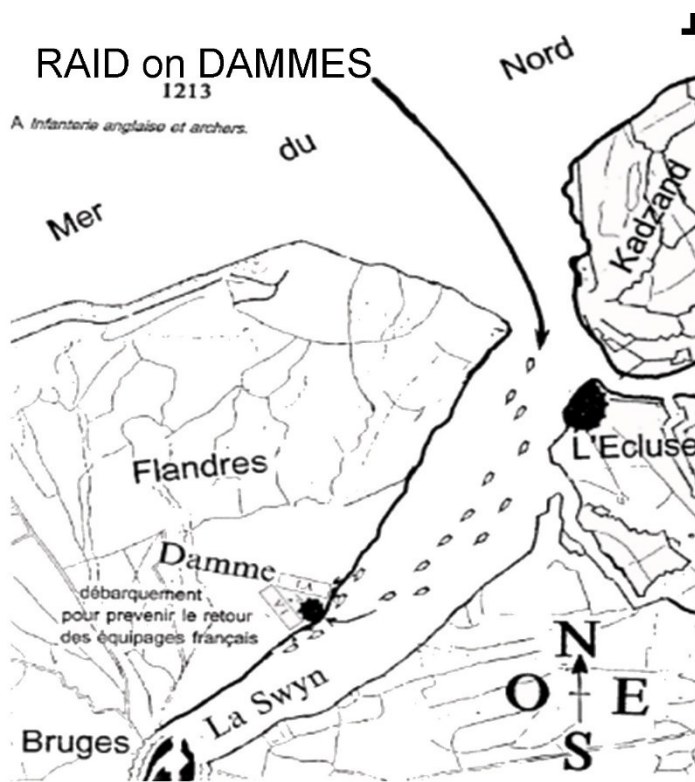
Casualties : Casualties are unknown but were heavy on both sides.

As a consequence of this French defeat , this English victory sealed the Anglo-Flemish alliance. On learning of the ruin of his fleet, Philip II., King of France, raised the siege of Ghent, arrived by forced march

⁸¹ Who was Count of Boulogne (Boleyn).

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

towards Damme, fell upon the English Expeditionary Force which had landed, defeated it, and took a very large number of prisoners.



Land Battle of Damme.

Other Name : Dam.

Date of the Action : 1213.

Location : Damme, a seaport located 8^{km} from Bruges on the Bruges Canal that runs from this city to Moerkerke. 51°25'; 3°27'

Conflict : Flanders campaign of Philippe II of France. English intervention.

Context : In January 1213, the Pope banished England from Christianity by excommunication. Philip II of France was very happy of being able *to steal without sinning*, and in his capacity as suzerain overlord of John Lackland (or the Landless) prepared to invade and execute the papal sentence. But, at the last minute, a papal legate (envoy) arrived, forbidding the invasion because John had submitted to the Pope. On May 22, 1213, Philippe Auguste, disappointed, decided to use this army against the Count of Flanders, Ferrand, who had signed a *secret treaty of mutual aid* with England. Flanders had asked for the help of John the Landless who sent the English fleet to Damme to destroy the French transports. After this destruction, an English fleet landed troops to march on Bruges.

Leaders *English fleet was commanded by William Longsword (Longue-épée) of Salisbury, assisted by Renaud de Dammartin, Count of Boulogne, and Hughes de Boves.

Troops engaged : About 10,000 men on both sides.

Strategy or tactics : Bruges was located at the bottom of the inlet on the shore of which was Dammes. Surprise was an important, if not determining, factor.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Summary of the action : On hearing the news of the English naval victory that had ruined his transport fleet, Philip II, King of France, flew into a violent rage. He immediately raised the siege of Ghent and set out on a march towards Damme, fell upon the English army which had landed to march on Bruges. Pierre Mauclerc, Count of Brittany, set out in advance with 500 knights, rode all night, and arrived at Damme about *the third hour of the day*. The French army of Philippe-Auguste followed closely. It entered the city the next day⁸². Suddenly, the two armies found themselves face to face. The French, in order of battle, threw themselves on the English. The fight was extremely fierce, commensurate with Philip's anger. A hail of darts fell on the English, as well as the terrible blows of Guillaume Des Barres. Eventually, the British retreated in disarray, leaving more than 2,000 killed on the field and many prisoners. Twenty-two English knights were taken prisoner for ransom. The Earl of Salisbury managed to escape. The survivors hurried back on board of their ships anchored near the island of Walcheren.

Casualties *2,000 English were killed in the bloody battle; 22 knights and many English sergeants were captured for ransom. *French losses are unknown but are likely to be significant.

Consequence of this English defeat : Yet, despite this land victory of the French, the English fleet still remained at sea, blocking the rest of the French transport fleet and keeping it locked in the fortified port of Damme. Showing by this that he was not in the least a sailor, Philippe II of France gave the order to burn his entire transport squadron. He did not want it to fall into the hands of the Anglo-Flemish. After this, the French army successfully continued the conquest of Flanders.



⁸² June 1, 1213.

Siege of Dangu.

Date of the Action : 1119

Localisation : Département of Eure, Canton of Gisors, altitude 86 m, on Epte river. 49°25'; 1°69'

Conflict : Anglo-Norman and Franco-English feudal rivalries.

Background : William [Guillaume] Crespin, owner of the fortress of Dangu, was one of the Normandy lords who, in 1118, leagued with the King of France⁸³ (against the King of England) in favour of William Clinton, son of the former Duke of Normandy Robert Curthose⁸⁴ held captive by Henry I of England. Louis the-Fat was trying to undo the dangerous union of England with Normandy. To punish Crespin, the King of England took Dangu from him in 1118 and gave it to Robert Chandos⁸⁵.

Leaders in attendance *The King of France, Louis VI the-Fat, commanded the besieging army. *Robert Chandos was at the head of the garrison.

Number of soldiers engaged: Unknown.

Strategy or tactics : The attack was carried out by escalation. The location of the fortress is still visible. It was about 150 metres from the road from Gisors to Vesly, on the right bank of the Epte River.

Summary of the action : In 1119, Louis VI the-Fat attacked the fortress of Dangu. Finding himself forced to capitulate, Chandos set fire to the

⁸³ Louis VI Le Gros (the Fat).

⁸⁴ Robert Courteheuse [short boots] or Curthose, essentially making fun of Robert's height!

⁸⁵ Ancestor of John Chandos, future English seneschal of Poitou, who was killed by the French at the battle of Lussac-les-Châteaux in 1370.

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fortress and fled with his English garrison to Gisors. The French soldiers scaled the walls on all sides with the help of assault ladders.

Casualties : Unknown.

The consequence of this English defeat was that it was a slap on the cheek of the King of England; but the practical consequences were negligible like most military actions of the Middle Ages.



The Castle of Dangu.



Siege of Derby.

Date of the Action : 1068.

Location : City 200 km N.N.W. of London, England, 52°92', 01°47'.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1068.

Context : After crushing the West in 1067, the rebels in the provinces of Mercia and Northumbria still had to be put down. The insurgents, fighting against the French occupation, took refuge in the forests and swamps to become "outlaws", hors-la-loi, outcasts called "forestiers"⁸⁶ by the French. Edgar Ætheling became the declared leader of the English Resistance by reneging on his oath of allegiance to the French. He took refuge in Scotland. The campaign of 1068 was therefore directed northwards. William stormed first Oxford, then Warwick and Leicester.

Leaders present *William the Bastard commanded the French.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown.

Strategy or tactics : Siege with rock throwing to destroy houses and make a breach. Then assault by climbing.

Summary of the action : In Derby, assaulted and stormed by the French, a third of the houses were destroyed.

Casualties : Unknown but heavy, especially on the English side because of reprisals.

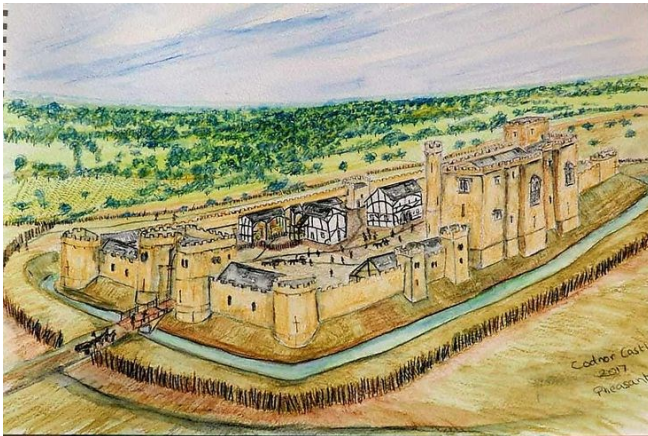
⁸⁶ Or "Savages" (from *silva*, forest); compare the qualifier "brigands" used by the English slaveholders to designate the abolitionist French Republicans during the War of Slavery in the West Indies [1791-1804], to that of "terrorists" of the German occupiers against the Resistance [Second World War], or "outlaws" in Algeria, during the War of Independence [1954-1962].

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

As a result of this English defeat , the lands of the English insurgents were re-distributed to French colonists.



Ruins of Codnor Castle in Derby. Most of England's castles were destroyed by the very people who used them as stone quarries to build their homes. Here's a representation of the castle at the time we're trying to reconstruct in these pages.



Siege of Dorchester.

Date of the Action : 1067.

Location : Dorset City, South of England, 50°71', 02°44'

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072.

Context : Dorset was agitated by English patriots opposed to the French occupation of the country, Dorchester, an old Roman city⁸⁷, was besieged and stormed by the French.

Leaders present : Unknown.

Strategy or tactics : Storming by climbing walls using ladders.

Summary of the action : Nothing is known about this action.

Casualties : Unknown.

As a result of this English defeat , the city was almost completely destroyed. Only a few houses were spared, as evidenced by the *Registre Book*⁸⁸.



⁸⁷ Chief town of *shire*.

⁸⁸ *Register Book*: the first cadastral, demographic and economic register of England, drawn up at the request of William the Bastard. The register was nicknamed the Register because of its indisputable nature. "Register" is a variant spelling of Domesday which means "day of [last] judgment". Indeed, one of the purposes of the census was to settle once and for all the disputes that had arisen over the taking possession of the land following the great transfer of Anglo-Saxon lands to the Franco-Normans." Another aim was to establish an efficient tax system, which was necessary for the maintenance of the French army of occupation in England. Because William was making the occupied country pay for his own army of occupation.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Capture of Dover.

Date of the action : 21 October 1066.

Location : English coastal town [Kent] 40 km N.E. of Romney. Coordinates: 51°13'; 01°32'

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Campaign of 1066.

Background : In 1066, on the death of Edward the Confessor, Harold Godwinson became King of England. But William the Bastard, Duke of Normandy, claimed that Harold had promised him the throne of England. To support his claims, William invaded England, destroyed the English army at Hastings and then walked up towards London. After destroying Romney, he came to lay siege to Dover.

Leaders in attendance *William the Bastard, Duke of Normandy commanded the French army. *The name of the English governor of Dover is unknown.

Troops engaged *About 7,000 men on the French side. *The number of men in the English garrison is not known.

Strategy or tactics : The city was stormed by climbing the walls with ladders. It also seems that a breach was made by a ballista⁸⁹ since the wall had to be repaired afterwards

Summary of the action : When the French arrived in front of Dover, Romney's destruction having terrorized the population, the inhabitants entrenched in the fortress, immediately sent emissaries to capitulate, when it could have held out for a long time. But during the negotiations,

⁸⁹ War machine used to throw darts or even rock-throwing.

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the impatient French set fire to the castle and the town, and massacred a number of inhabitants. William punished those responsible and had the fire fought. The brand new fortress was located on a rocky outcrop washed by the sea. The site was naturally steep but the inhabitants had carved the mountain to make the fortress impregnable. Only a few details of the siege are known. The city was burned down and the fortress surrendered unconditionally. William spent eight days at Dover repairing the walls and installing a French garrison.

Losses : Quite heavy on the English side only.

As a consequence of this English defeat , the violence of the French against the civilian population weakened the will to resist in other English cities.



Dover Castel

Siege of Dover.

Date of the action : May or June 1067.

Location : City in England. 51°13'; 01°32'.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1067.

Context : England was conquered but not yet pacified. William the Bastard had gone to spend the Easter holidays of 1067 in France. He had brought back an enormous quantity of booty, confiscated in England, which he distributed very generously in the monasteries and churches. But bad news arrived from England : revolt was brewing among the Anglo-Saxon population, despised and humiliated by the French occupier. However, this did not seem to cause trouble in William's mind, and he did not return to England until December 6th, 1067.

Leaders in the presence *The English insurgents were commanded by Eustache de Boulogne⁹⁰.

***Forces** *English insurgents reinforced by soldiers from the Boulonnais (Eustache was from Boulogne); numbers unknown. *The numbers of the French garrison at Dover are no better known.

⁹⁰ Alors qu'en 1066, Eustache combat à Hastings en compagnie de Guillaume le Bâtard, en 1067, pour des raisons obscures, il essaie, avec l'aide d'insurgés anglais de s'emparer du château de Douvres. Devant l'échec de sa tentative, il doit s'enfuir, et perd toutes ses possessions anglaises. Toutefois, il se réconcilie avec Guillaume le Conquérant et redevient son allié pour récupérer son patrimoine colonial, grâce à quoi il retrouve effectivement tous ses fiefs d'Angleterre. À la rédaction du Domesday Book (ou *État de l'arpentage définitif de la colonie anglaise au profit des Français*) en 1086, Eustache de Boulogne a des possessions dans douze comtés anglais. Ses domaines produisent un revenu annuel estimé à 915 livres tournoi. Ce qui fait de lui le dixième baron laïc le plus riche du royaume d'Angleterre.

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Strategy or tactics : Escalation assaults using ladders. The *sortie* to counterattack was decisive. The lack of preparation, the isolation (lack of support) of the revolt which was too local, the lack of seriousness and determination of the continental ally, Eustace de Boulogne, all this caused the insurrection to fail.

Summary of the action : The English insurgents took advantage of the absence of Bishop Odo de Bayeux, who held the office of *viceroi* in William's absence, and of Hughes de Montfort, commander of Dover Castle. William had left Dover with the greater part of his troops. The Kent insurgents appealed to Eustache de Boulogne, who was tormented by ambition. They sent him a message and Eustache arrived with a small troop of Boulonnais. He made a descent into Kent to seize Dover, which the insurgents had promised him. Eustache therefore attacked the castle of Dover. The French garrison resisted. It repulsed all attacks one after the other, despite sustained attempts. On the announcement⁹¹ of the return of William the Bastard, Eustache and the English rebels precipitately abandoned the siege. When the French garrison saw that the attackers were retreating, they proceeded to make a *sortie* and turned the retreat into a complete rout. Many perished at the foot of the rocky cliff on which the fortress stood.

Losses : Very heavy on the Anglo-Boulognese side.

Consequence of this Anglo-Boulonaise defeat : Not very important, William did not even bother to return to England when the revolt was announced.



⁹¹ A totally wrong announcement, by the way.

Siege of Dover.

Date of the Action : 1069

Location : City in England [Kent] 40 km N.E. of Romney. 51°13'; 01°32'

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1069.

Background : A Danish relief fleet was transporting English exiles. It attacked Dover, where Hughes de Montfort⁹² was in command. The French garrison repulsed the Anglo-Danish attacks.

Leaders in attendance *Hughes de Montfort commanded the French garrison.

Strategy or tactics : Assaults against the walls with ladders.

Action Summary : This is the invasion of an Anglo-Danish fleet of 240 to 300 ships, with an army almost equal to that of Harold Hardrada in 1066. After landing, this Anglo-Danish army was augmented by a multitude of English insurgents commanded by Edgar the Ætheling, the pretender to the English crown.

Casualties : Unknown.

Consequence of this Anglo-Danish defeat : All the successive failures of this fleet helped to calm the spirits by removing all hope of obtaining a change of freedom by force.

⁹² Presumably. Hughes de Montfort (Hugh II) was a nobleman from Normandy. He was Lord of Montfort-sur-Risle, Constable of Normandy and a companion of William the Conqueror.

Siege of Dover.

Date of the action : 25 July 1216

Location : South East coast of England; 51°13'; 01°32'.

Conflict *English Civil War against King John Lackland or War of the English Succession. *French participation of Prince Louis.

Context : The English defeat of Bouvines provoked a revolt by the English barons against their King John Lackland. Not only did the barons wrest from him the *Magna Carta* which weakened his power in favor of the high nobility, but they even wanted to depose this king judged incapable, who had behaved cowardly during the battle of La Roche-aux-Moines. They sent a deputation to Prince Louis, heir to the crown of France⁹³, to offer him the throne of England. However, it was up to Louis to conquer this power by dethroning the tyrant who oppressed them. In December 1215, Philippe Auguste sent the English insurgents a reinforcement of 7,000 French soldiers. On January 7th, 1216, new French troops, transported by 41 ships, landed in London. Eustache Le-Moine, a French pirate, ensured the logistical lines of communication between France and England. Out of 800 ships of all tonnages, the invading French army embarked at Boulogne, Gravelines, Wissant [50.88608, 1.65734] and Calais. They were to place Prince Louis on the throne of England : 1,200 knights with their *retinue*⁹⁴. On 20 May 1216, at 21:00, the fleet weighed anchor, but was immediately shaken by a storm, during which several knights drowned. Ships returned to Calais, and when Prince Louis touched Stonar [or Stonor], in the "island" of Thanet, he had

⁹³ The same one who had defeated John without Land at La Roche-aux-Moines; supreme insult.

⁹⁴ A *retinue* is a body of (6) persons "retained" in the service of a knight, royal personage, or dignitary.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

only 7 ships left. "There was not a single galley captain, loyal enough to seize Louis and send his head to the king⁹⁵."

Leaders in attendance *A French pirate Eustache Le Moine blockaded Dover on the waterfront. The Dauphin Louis led the besieging army. *Admiral Philippe d'Aubigné⁹⁶ commanded the English squadron.

Troops engaged *3 or 4,000 Franco-English besieged Dover. *The loyalist English garrison numbered a few hundred soldiers.

Strategy or tactics : The fortress of Dover stood on a rocky outcrop. At the time, there was no artillery on the ships, but the quicklime curtain and the fire of archers and crossbowmen were equally devastating.

Summary of the action : Dover had been invested and besieged by the Franco-English troops since July 25. After retaking the Channel Islands, Eustache Le-Moine blockaded Dover by sea. On 23 April, Prince Louis, who had gone to France to seek reinforcements, left Calais with the contingents from the counts of Brittany, of Dreux, Perche and Guines. He landed at Sandwich. Dover was again assaulted but without success. This was the fourth major assault. On 16 May, 1217, a flotilla arrived from France to assist the siege army. Philippe d'Aubigné, an admiral in the service of England, attacked it, captured 8 ships and dispersed the others. The mariners and sergeants who were prisoners were thrown overboard (drowned), and the knights held at the bottom of the hold for ransom. From then on, the fleet of Philippe d'Aubigné, anchored in front of Dover, arose against the danger that would threaten the place on the seaward side. But it could not prevent the landing of new troops of 120 new French ships, on May 29.

Casualties : Severe losses, although not quantified, on both sides.

⁹⁵ The English historian W. Laird Clowes wrote with sadness. This shows how tired the English people were of King John.

⁹⁶ Also spelled, according to the laws of phonetic mutations, d'Albiny.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Consequence of this French defeat : This siege had no significant consequence on the course of the war.



Dover

Attack on Dover.

Date of the action : 1 August 1295.

Location : West Coast of England. 51°13'; 01°32'.

Conflict : Feudal war between the kings of France and the kings of England, the latter being, for their continental possessions, vassal of the other.

Context : Philip IV of France armed two squadrons. The first, that of Montmorency, with 300 ships of all sizes, went to Flanders.

Leaders in attendance *Admiral Bouchard VIII de Montmorency commanded the French.

Numbers engaged : Many of the 300 ships of the French squadron could have been simple fishing boats. 15,000 men.

Strategy or tactics : Surprise initially worked in favour of the French; the garrison of the castle held out long enough to allow reinforcements to arrive. "Surprise becomes the means of acquiring superiority... Secrecy and speed are the two factors of this product... Surprise has the singular effect of loosening the bonds of unity to the extreme, so that the individuality of each one appears more apparently⁹⁷." It should be noted that England had just adopted the cross of St. George as a distinctive sign that was hoisted on the towers of Dover⁹⁸.

⁹⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, chap. IX, pp.207-211

⁹⁸ St. George was born in Asia Minor, and enlisted in the Roman army under Diocletian [284-305]. Despite the order of his emperor, he was baptized a Christian and was beheaded in 303 when he refused to renounce his religion. He was beatified. According to legend, he killed a dragon that threatened to suffocate the king's daughter. Paradoxically, at the Battle of Hastings, it was the cross of St. George of the French that came to crush the dragon that served as the standard of the English. In 1295, the cross of St. George had only held the role of national symbol of the English for 18 years; the 1st flag with the cross of Saint-Georges had been hoisted in 1277. St. George is today the patron saint of soldiers, gunsmiths, peasants and Englishmen. From then on, English soldiers invoked him when they went into battle.

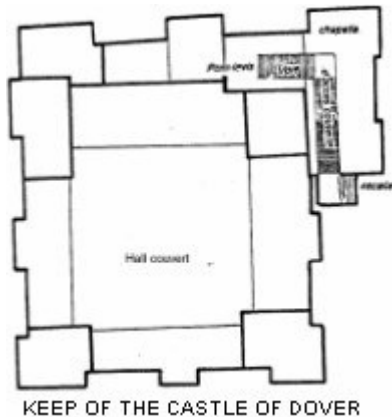
French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Summary of the action : On August 1st, this army of 15,000 men landed west of Dover at an unguarded point because of its high cliffs. The city was surprised. The monks of the priory sought refuge in the bell tower and escaped from the attackers, with the exception of one of them. The fire stopped only at the ramparts of the castle. There was the Guardian of the *Cinque Ports*. His resistance gave the Coast Militia time to charge *en masse*. Driven back to their ships, the French left 500 men on the field, on the shore, in the harvests where they were massacred by the peasants. Thirty men, cut off from their companions, entrenched themselves in the cloister of the abbey : at nightfall, after a desperate resistance which left 14 Englishmen dead, they threw themselves into two boats. But two English ships chased them and captured them.

After this raid, the squadron returned to Calais.

Casualties : About 500 men died on both sides.

As a result of this coup de main : The city, except for the château, was destroyed by fire, but the English launched retaliatory raids on the coasts of France.



"The Durham Case."

Date of the action: 28 January 1069.

Location : City in England, on the Anglo-Scottish border, located 400 km north of London. 54°77'; 1° 58'.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1069.

Context : England was conquered, but armed insurrections broke out everywhere, inspired by the Anglo-Saxon nobility who had been excluded from domination of the English people by the French who had replaced them. William had given Robert de Comines the earldom of Durham⁹⁹. Too sure of himself, Comines went up to Scotland with only 500 men. Two hundred kilometers separate Durham from York, and Robert de Comines was engaged in the middle of a rebellious country. The bishop of Durham, having learned that a conspiracy was hatched against the new masters, the French, and not wishing to suffer the consequences, came to inform Robert de Comines, who took no notice of it. Finally, Comines nevertheless entered the town of Durham.

Leaders in attendance *Robert de Comines commanded the French.

Troops engaged **English:* the insurgent population of Durham.

**French:* 500 men-at-arms.

Strategy or tactics : The city of Durham occupied an entire bend in the Wear River. The episcopal palace and the cathedral were the only buildings of any solidity, built by the French as a keep to withstand an assault. Fortifications, located at the entrance to the loop and the city, were later built by the French.

⁹⁹ He had been created de facto Earl of Northumberland.

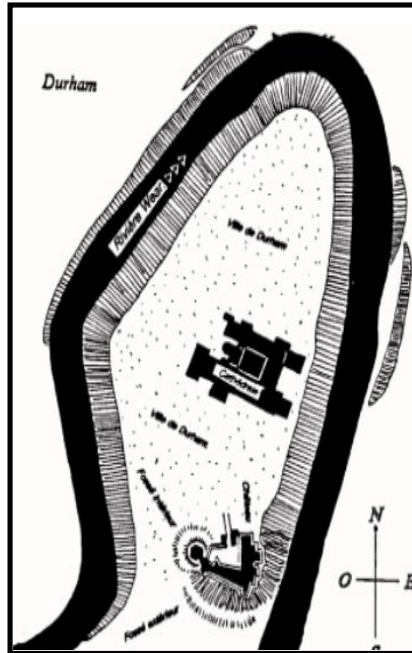
French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Summary of the action : In the evening, the English insurgents came to attack the bishop's episcopal palace where de Comines and his troops were entrenched. The French resisted for a long time with their bows. Finally, the English set fire to the episcopal palace and massacred all the French. Not one survived.

French losses *500 French killed *English population losses are not known.

Consequence of this French defeat : This victory redoubled the enthusiasm of the English insurgents and extended the insurrection.

Durham Cathedral, built by the French from 1096. The episcopal palace was first built. The heart of the historic city is located on a peninsula encircled by a bend in the Wear River; like Besançon in France. This natural defensive site was chosen by William the Bastard who became William I of England. It was intended to monitor the local English populations as well as the marches of Scotland. Because of its strategic location, Durham became an important seat held by a prince-bishop. The castle, built in the strait leading to the river peninsula, in the meander, in order to defend the only access to the then unfortified old town, remained until 1836 the palace of the archbishop. The French chapel is the oldest part of the current building, which is located on the motte, an original artificial mound surrounded by the lice or bailey. At the beginning of the twelfth century, the peninsula was surrounded by a wall that is still visible today. Durham was then a centre of pilgrimage because its cathedral housed the body of Saint-Cuthbert, a monk and bishop of Lindisfarne, who died in the seventh century. Hughes de Puiset (1125-1195), the greatest of the Prince-Bishops of Durham, added the chapel of Galilee in which the venerable Bede, chronicler of Anglo-Saxon England, was buried.



Reduction of the last pocket of resistance on the Isle of Ely.

Date of the Action : 1071.

Location : The Isle of Ely or Ely Island was a dry region surrounded by swamps; it was "an Island", in Eastern England¹⁰⁰ where English and out-laws had taken refuge resisting the French invasion. Average coordinates: 52°39'; 00°26'.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1071.

Background : The very harsh "pacification campaign" of the winter of 1070 almost completely broke the will of the English people to resist. The rest of the year 1070 was fairly quiet. On 27 November 1069, Brand, abbot of Peterborough monastery, died. The Frenchman Turolde, a monk from Fécamp (France), became abbot on April 4th, 1070, in order to subdue Hereward and his friends, outlaw resistance fighters, in the Fens. He arrived at Stamford on June 1st, 1070, at the head of a French troop to take possession of his monastery. On June 2nd, English and Danish outlaw resistance fighters, led by Hereward, looted and burned the monks' monasterial house, and all but one house in the town. On June 2nd, sixteen Frenchmen arrived at Petersborough. The English and Danes had already left. The French had difficulty penetrating the swamps of the "island of Ély", whose hiding places were only known to the *guerrilleros* or *maquisards*.¹⁰¹ Finally, William blockaded the entire district, and little by little, tree after tree, tightened the noose to stifle any resistance. Famine began to be felt within the area. The Saxon Superior Father of the monks

¹⁰⁰ The so-called "Dutch marsh" because of the large number of Dutch settled in the region. The city of Lille, in northern France, also takes its name from the fact that it formed an island of dry land surrounded by swamps. The two names, Ély and Lille, are also corruptions of the French L'Île.

¹⁰¹ Readers will of course have noticed that these terms are anachronistic. The French referred to these resistance fighters as *Forestiers*, Foresters in English.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

of Ely, seeing that the situation was hopeless¹⁰² and wishing to save at least his own life by betraying the outlaws, offered to show William a secret path that led to the very heart of the resistance. William followed their advice, and the guerrilla forces collapsed and had to capitulate.

Leaders in attendance *William the Bastard commanded the French ground troops.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown.

Strategy or tactics : This swampy region was difficult to access and was attacked by amphibious operation. In addition, *a causeway was built* through the area to make it accessible to the French Cavalry. The island of Ely was the last important *pocket* of the English resistance. It was part of an immense marshy region in the east of England¹⁰³, the southern tip of which descended almost to Cambridge, and which ended at the latitude of Lincoln, bordering the shores of the Gulf of Wash: in all one hundred kilometers long by sixty wide; rivers full of pitfalls, inextricable network of dead canals and marshes. The "island" had begun to be used as an *outlaw forestiers* retreat during the Danish invasion of 1069. Against the French, they built a camp-refuge. The softness and instability of the ground, the waterlogged soil, did not permit any expedition of cavalry, and this labyrinth of reeds led the pursuers astray. In addition, thanks to the Wash Gulf, maritime rescue was possible for food and weapon supply.

Summary of the action : A troop of rebellious English from Berkshire, from Sainte-Marie d'Abingdon, set out to join the outlaw insurgents, but was intercepted by a French contingent. The English were killed, or captured, and severely punished. Eager to dislodge all these holdouts, William the Bastard assembled land troops as well as a fleet manned by

¹⁰² And that it could become dangerous for them if they did not act in the slightest against the rebellion.

¹⁰³ Quite similar to the Mississippi Delta.

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partially English crews under French command. Ivon Taillebois¹⁰⁴, a *vigilante*, a large landowner in this region, participated as a *vigilante* in the hunt for English outlaws, as well as Guillaume Malet. The French headquarter was set up at Cambridge Castle. The naval operation started from the east [of Brandon] on the Petite Ouse to block all the exits of the "island", while William blocked the land front. Other naval attacks came from Reche¹⁰⁵. The main effort was directed westward against Aldreth. William's first attempt ended in failure : he had a stone wooden path built (partly as embankment) in the marshes, but this path was partially on stilts and burned down by Hereward. A second attack broke through the island's defenses. A bridgehead was created at Aldreth where a castle was later erected by the Bastard. To the south, the French built an embankment road, *a causeway*, to penetrate the swamps. According to Hereward's (highly legendary) tradition, he harassed the French during the construction of the road and disguised himself as a spy on them. The subjugation of the Ely *pocket of resistance* took a few months.

Casualties : Unknown but very heavy on the English side.

As a result of this English defeat, the French built the castle of Ely and a French garrison was installed at Aldreth, the key to hold Ely. When the pocket of resistance on the island of Ely was finally reduced by the French, William kept some insurgents in captivity ; others had their eyes gouged out, or their hands cut off. Morkar, who had betrayed his oath of allegiance to the French, agreed to surrender unconditionally and was sent to France for detention. In 1072, Edwin and Morkar perjured each other again and came to take over the leadership of the resistance in the same sector. This new defection marked the last efforts of the French to make the English participate in the government of England. From 1072 onwards, William the Bastard eliminated them completely from his

¹⁰⁴ Ivo (Yvon) Taillebois, Ivon FitzReinfrid de Taillebois, born in 1036 at Cristot (Calvados), died in 1094 in Kendal, England, Earl of Holland, Sheriff of Lincoln, 1st Baron of Kendal. This very low-lying region had become populated by Dutch people and was surnamed Holland. That's why Taillebois became Earl of Holland.

¹⁰⁵ Point that commanded La Rechelode.

policy and no longer even sought to give them a place in the new social order of England. French became the only official language. Count Morkar was tricked out of Ely Island and imprisoned. His brother Earl Edwin was betrayed by his entourage and murdered by his own bodyguards. William, who, in spite of everything, was very fond of Edwin, exiled the assassins who, in order to gain William the Bastard's good graces, had brought him Edwin's head. The Danes returned under the pretext of helping the English and ran away with part of their treasure. When the island of Ely was pacified, the French pushed on to Scotland where King Malcolm the Third, worried about his throne, finally accepted peace. So, William returned to the continent to put down the Revolt of the Manceaux¹⁰⁶. *He took English auxiliary soldiers for the first time* in 1072, and they were exceptionally cruel. The oppressed often take revenge on more than vulnerable than themselves.

In England, which was at last pacified, William had reserved for himself 1,422 manors and castles, Robert de Mortain 795 and Eudes de Bayeux 439. But for two more centuries, *outlaws* were recruited, especially in the region of Durham, which Bishop Eudes de Bayeux, brother of William the Bastard, had ravaged in 1080, because the resistance fighters had assassinated Vulcher, bishop of Durham, a real tyrant. Eudes received for this purpose the title of "*the greatest tamer of Englishmen*"¹⁰⁷, of which he was very proud. Since the Conquest and Colonization of England had prospered, it was not only soldiers who crossed the Channel, but entire French families of civilians who emigrated from all the provinces of France to colonize, seek fortune and social rank in this "little America" where the English language did not become official again in the courts until the end of the XIVth century. Many men went to fight in the army of William just to obtain lands confiscated from the English. Others amassed enormous booty and returned to their country, France. One of the elements that maintained this English resistance was the violence and contempt to which the English were subjected by the

¹⁰⁶ Or who perhaps wanted to clear himself of this crime that the public rumor attributed to him. From 24 February to 4 April, Revolt of the Manceaux in France against an increase in taxes for the benefit of the Nobility and the Clergy by the Lord Geoffroy de Mayenne, and the bishop Arnaud (1070-1073). The Manceaux are the people from the Maine province.

¹⁰⁷ Note the parallel with the conquest of America, when the English wolfers prided themselves on being exterminators of wolves and Indians.

French colonizers¹⁰⁸. A law of William dated 1087 specified : "*When a Frenchman is killed or found dead in any canton, the inhabitants of the canton must seize and bring the murderer within eight days, if not*¹⁰⁹..." The canton had to provide irrefutable proof that the corpse was not that of a Frenchman [Freceis] in order not to have to pay a heavy fine. Nearly three centuries later, this investigation was still being carried out in places, according to some. It was the "Demonstration of Englishness"¹¹⁰. [Thomas de Littleton (1407 -- 1481), Treaty of tenure.]

Over time, the entire Anglo-Saxon resistance to the French took on the romantic tone of legends. "But presumably, these legends do not represent reality, because they are exactly the kind of legends that are invented by a humiliated and beaten people, who need heroes to regain some pride. Even more legendary and dreamlike epics like those of Robin Hood¹¹¹ and his band of outlaws, which began to proliferate two centuries later, are sometimes considered another series of Anglo-Saxon dreams of resistance¹¹²."

FRANCIZATION OF ENGLAND

"Since Normandy was a province ruled by a duke who owed homage to the King of France, this also meant that from then on "English" politics became part of French politics. But the inter-link with the French went even further: the French of Normandy brought with them to England the French language and culture¹¹³." Moreover, "we are not

¹⁰⁸ The term "Frenchman" was used and not that of "Norman", not only by the laws but also by the Saxon chronicles, the Normans had already been French for four or five generations. Moreover, in England, the number of settlers from the other provinces of France quickly exceeded the number from Normandy alone.

¹⁰⁹ : "Ki Freceis occist, et les men del hundred nel prengent et apporter à la Justice..." The *hundred* was a subdivision of the county [until 1974] corresponding to 100 hides. The hide was, originally, the area necessary for a peasant family to live (meagrely, it is true).

¹¹⁰ "La demonstration d'Anglaiserie." This system of collective responsibility was, in the twentieth century, sometimes imposed in British colonies.

¹¹¹ Robin Hood, which was mistranslated into Robin Hood, by confusion between Hood and Wood, should have been translated as Robin and Hood.

¹¹² Isaac Asimov, *The Shaping of England*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston [USA] 1969. Page 161. He was anxious to obtain power from his father, who lived too long at his will.

¹¹³ "The Normans, being Frenchmen, brought with them to England the French language and French culture." Morgan, Kenneth, O., *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain*, Edited by Kenneth O. Morgan, Guild Publishing, London, 1984; page 107. Le texte cité est de John Gillingham.

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dealing with a single massive input of «Frenchness» in the generation after 1066 followed by a gradual reassertion of «Englishness». The Conquest of 1066 was followed by an Angevin conquest of 1153-54; although this did not involve the settlement of a [new French] Loire Valley aristocracy in England, the effect of the arrival of the court of Henry II Plantagenêt and Eleanor of Aquitaine was to reinforce the dominance of French culture... Indeed, so great was the pre-eminence of France in the fields of music, literature, and architecture, that French became a truly international rather than just a national language, a language spoken—and written—by anyone who wanted to consider himself civilized. Thus, in thirteenth-century England, French became, if anything, even more important than it had been before. Throughout most of the period covered by this chapter a well-educated Englishman was trilingual. English would be his mother tongue; he would have some knowledge of Latin, and he would speak fluent French. In this cosmopolitan society French was vital. It was the practical language of law and estate management as well as the language of song and verse, of *chanson* and *romance*. The "Norman Conquest", in other words, ushered in a period during which England, like the Kingdom of Jerusalem, can fairly be described as a part of France overseas. In political terms, it was a French colony (though not, of course, one that belonged to the French king) until the early thirteenth century and a cultural colony thereafter."¹¹⁴

"By the time of William the Conqueror's death in 1087, about half the cultivated land in the country was in the hands of tenant-in-chief, nearly all French...; a quarter was in the hands of churchmen, only two of them Englishmen; most of the rest was held directly by the Crown"¹¹⁵. "One of the first changes that the Franco-Normans made was that of place names. These toponymic changes occurred partly through the *Registre Book* and partly directly, through deliberate changes of names on the ground. The total number of place names changed was not large,

¹¹⁴ John Gillingham, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain*, Edited by Kenneth O. Morgan, Guild Publishing, Londres, 1984; pages 107-108

¹¹⁵ Hibbert, Christopher, *The English, A Social History, 1066-1945*, W.W.Norton & Company, London, 1986; prologue. Figures from the *Ancien-Régime* in France show that a third of real estate in France belonged to the Clergy (120,000 ecclesiastics or 0.5% of the French population), half to the Nobility (140,000 aristocrats or 0.6%) and 15-18% to the *Bourgeoisie*, i.e. a small fraction of the *Tiers-État* (98.9%).

however, but it did include Beaumont (Essex),.. which was Fulanpettæ, or "foul pit"¹¹⁶! It is to the Normans and their French successors that today's England owes the majority of its French-derived toponyms. Wharham Percy in Yorkshire was held by Guillaume [William] de Percy in 1177, and Huish Champflower (Somerset) was held in 1212 by Thomas de Champfleurs (originally from Champfleury in Normandy). Bere [burgh or bourg] Ferrers (Byrfferers in 1239) belonged to Guillaume de Ferrers in 1242, and derives from one of the ferrieres¹¹⁷ of Normandy. Tolleshunt d'Arcy was named after a certain Robert Darcy of Normandy. Many French toponyms did not come from the mainland but were simply local descriptions. Belvoir (now pronounced Biveur in England) in Leicestershire means Beautiful View. Grosmont (in Monmouthshire) for its part, which means big hill, is probably a direct transplant."

"Even when the first Celtic and Saxon toponyms were preserved, the spelling and pronunciation were Frenchified over time. The [th], for example, so difficult to pronounce for a French mouth, was replaced by a simple t, as in Tarleton, and the y as in Jarrow. These spelling changes resulted in *Searoburg* being mutated into *Salisbury*.

Although the language of trade and court (under the French, the Angevins and the Plantagenets) was French, official documents were written in Latin [as in France, for that matter]; Latin was the sacred language of the Church. Thus, from the medieval period come toponyms such as Chapel-en-le-Frith, and those that include words such as Magna, Parva or... Patronymic names of French origin can be found from this period¹¹⁸, where many English-sounding names derive from French. Examples : Grenfell and Greenfield are a corruption of Granville. Many surnames come from the Britons who arrived in the wake of the conquest of 1066 —Hugh[es] and Ala[i]n for example, with their many variants, can be found in first names and patronymic names. Although there was a wide variety of names in the Middle Ages, it is interesting to note that, by the fourteenth century, the French names of Henry [Henri], John [Jehan or Jean], Richard, Robert and William [Guillaume] formed up to

¹¹⁶ Or *foul hole*; name unlikely to attract tourists, compared to modern toponymy.

¹¹⁷ Forges or foundries.

¹¹⁸ Such as Montague, Burgoyne, Bacon, Becket [Bequet], Fitz (son of) + father's first name [Fitzpatrick, Fitzwilliam, Fitzgerald, Fitzmaurice, Fitzsimmons...]

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64% of known male names in England. Other names were far behind: Alfonsus [Alphonse], Lanfrancs and Conrad¹¹⁹..."

According to the English historian Christopher Hibbert, it was not until the fourteenth century that French lost ground in England, much to the chagrin of conservatives ; one of them, whose writings date from 1385, complained that young people did not apply themselves sufficiently to learning French, "and it is injurious to them if they cross the sea to travel to distant lands, and in many other circumstances"¹²⁰." In fact, English was very slowly emerging from its status as a *local patois* and nibbling away at *French's status as the official language of England*. Edward III of England, who did not speak a word of English, wrote this letter on September 3, 1346: "Edgard, par la grâce de Dieu, tpy d'Angleterre et de France et seigneur d'Irlande, à son chier [cher] et feal chevalier Thomas Lucy, saluz. Pour ce que nous savoms bien que vous orretz [entendrez] volunters bones nouvelles de nous, nous fesosns savoir que nous arrivames à la Hogue près Harfluz le dozisme [douzième] jour de juyillet darreyn [passé], avec toutz noz gentz seyns et saufs, loué en soit Dieux! Et illequoques [là] demurasmes sur le deskiperre de nos gentz et chivalx et le vitailier [ravitaillement] de nos gentz, tant que le marsdi prochain ensuant [suivant], euquel jour nous movasmes avec notre host devers Valongnes et preimes le chastel et la ville..." This text gives an idea of the French of the time, in the west of present-day France.

The hard-to-reach swampy region of Ely Island was the last pocket of resistance against the French, who had to create a causeway to reduce it permanently. The latter legends of the hooded thief (robin Hood) originated there.



¹¹⁹ Laing, Lloyd and Jennifer, *Medieval Britain, The Age of Chivalry*, Herbert Press, London, 1996; pages 75 et suiv.

¹²⁰ Hibbert, Christopher, *The English, A Social History, 1066-1945*, W.W.Norton & Company, London, 1986; page 116. It is true that on page 121, the same English author assures us that Edward III [who reigned from 1327 to 1377] was the first king of England to speak English; others spoke only French, since William the Conqueror.

Ambush of Evreux.

Date of the action : March 1194.

Location : Capital of the Eure department, on the Iton River, 102 km west of Paris; at 49°02'; 01°15'.

Conflict : Feudal wars between the kings of France and England.

Background : Richard the Lionheart Plantagenêt (son of King Henry II of England and Eléanor of Aquitaine), was King of England from 1189 [until 1199]. In 1191, he left for the Third Crusade with Philippe II, King of France¹²¹. Philippe returned before him and began to seize the English strongholds, aided by John Lackland, the jealous brother of Richard the Lionheart. "Of all the kings of history, there are few who have so inflated a reputation as Richard who succeeded to the English throne on the death of his father, Henry II. He is «Richard Cœur-de-Lion» or, in English, «Richard the Lionheart», a hero-king revered in hundreds of pieces of historic fiction. To be sure, he was a giant in strength and in bravery, and an excellent leader of men where the victories went entirely to the stronger muscles... In all matters other than strength and physical bravery, however, Richard was quite a despicable person. He was a disloyal and treacherous son and brother, and rarely saw farther than the end of his nose... He was not even a manly person, except for his ability to fight. He lacked resolution and another nickname for him (not as well-known as Lion-Heart) was «Richard Yea-and-Nay» meaning he could easily be swayed to either side of a question and no one could rely on his staying on one side once he had been swayed there. Nor (unlike his father) was he particularly interested in women... As for England, which later came to venerate him (mainly because of his name and the fictional novels that

¹²¹ The two distrustful kings felt their country was safe only when they went to the Holy Land *together*. It was a bit like certain African presidents who, on their official trips, always bring with them those they don't trust, and not their best collaborators for fear of a coup. But in this case, the king of France returned home before the other.

featured him as a hero), he took no thought for this country and rarely set foot in it. For England, he was nothing more than a source of vast expenditure."¹²² In 1187, Saladin defeated a Crusader army and captured Jerusalem. Stirred up by the enthusiasm of his people, Henry II of England who was still alive, took an oath to go on crusade¹²³. Philippe Auguste of France and Richard the Lionheart too. As soon as Richard took power in England, he levied a special tax to pay for the expedition : *Saladin's Tenth*¹²⁴. He sold ecclesiastical offices, charters to the cities, sovereignty to Scotland, squeezed the Jews, and, to justify himself, so smeared them that it unleashed pogroms throughout England. At York, for example, all the Jews, men, women, and children, were horribly mutilated and massacred by the furious English populace. The fiscal frustrations of the English had thus found their scapegoats and their whipping boys. As we can see, Richard the Lionheart enjoys a slightly overrated aura¹²⁵. " Later on the Crusade, he showed the little chivalrous respect he felt for human life in general and for that of his enemies in particular, by slaughtering in cold blood 2,600 Muslim prisoners because the resistance of the garrison of St. John of Acre made him stamp his feet with impatience. By this gesture, as barbarous as it was anti-tactical, he encouraged the former to resist even more. When Acre finally fell to the Crusaders, Archduke Leopold of Austria, at the head of his Austrian contingent, stuck the pole of his standard on top of one of the towers of the fortress. Furious, the King of England, Richard the Lionheart, who could not tolerate another crusader prince overshadowing him, had this standard removed by an English soldier who threw it to the ground. Leopold

¹²² Asimov, Isaac, *The Shaping of England*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston [USA] 1969; pages 233-234.

¹²³ But he died before that and it was his heir Richard the Lionheart who left alone.

¹²⁴ In English *Saladin's tithe* or *Saladin's tenth*. This tax was only one more in the long list of royal, seigneurial, and ecclesiastical taxes. Examples include the *wood-penny* for the right to collect dead wood on the lands and in the seigneurial forests, the *agistment*, for the right to graze in the lord's forest, the *chiminage* for the right to transport business in these forests, the *bodel silver*, for the right to dwell on the lord's lands; the *fodder corn* was the grain that a villain had to give to feed the lord's horses, the *heriot* the right of the lord to appropriate the most beautiful beast of the troop of a dead villain... all pretexts were good for robbing the poor people. The *villains* were the free peasants. The *serfs*, on the other hand, were subject to other demands.

¹²⁵ During the commemoration of his death, on April 6, 1999 [800th anniversary], only the French Limousin organized demonstrations. There was no celebration in England where this king had spent only six months of his life.

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protested, and, in reply, was said to have been kicked in the fleshy part of his person. But revenge is a dish that is sometimes eaten lukewarm. When Richard returned to England shortly afterwards, in 1192, after signing a three-year truce with Saladin¹²⁶. He landed near Venice and *disguised himself* in order to continue his journey by land. But his stature and arrogance made him a cumbersome being and difficult to hide. He had the bad idea of crossing Austria, and near Vienna what was bound to happen happened; he was surrounded by the soldiers of Archduke Leopold of Austria, the same one he had basely insulted in the Holy Land and who had matured an irrepressible desire to kick his buttocks in turn. With an ironic smile, Leopold was happy to fix an absolutely enormous ransom. Woe to the powerful who abuse his power if, by chance, he falls from his power ! Richard had even better placed enemies, however, the Emperor Henry VI¹²⁷ himself, whom Richard had offended in Sicily during his journey to the Holy Land¹²⁸. The Emperor demanded¹²⁹ that the prisoner be handed over to him and threatened Richard the Lionheart with handing him over to his suzerain-overlord, Philippe II Auguste of France, if he did not agree to pay him a gigantic ransom of 150,000 marks¹³⁰ and a humiliating recognition of the Emperor's suzerainty over England¹³¹. The sum was raised, of course, by heavily taxing his subjects. The thrashing of Richard the Lionheart had cost an immense fortune to

¹²⁶ And after the return of Philippe de France who played the sick man. Saladin I, Arabic Salāh al-Dīn Yūsuf, born in Takrit (Mesopotamia, or Iraq) 1138-1193. At the age of 33, he was the first Ayyubid sultan from 1171 to 1193. He united under his authority Egypt, the Hejaz [region of Arabia located along the Red Sea. It included the holy cities of Medina and Mecca. This region declared itself independent from the Ottoman Empire in 1916, and was the base of Saudi Arabia, Syria and Mesopotamia. He championed the Holy War for the conversion of the Christian infidels. In 1187, he had seized Jerusalem, hence this Crusade.

¹²⁷ Of the Holy Roman Empire.

¹²⁸ In 1190, he had crossed into Sicily and had entered into a dispute with Tancred, the last Franco-Norman monarch of the island. He had finally signed a treaty with Tancred, but the wording had offended the new German emperor Henry VI, who was disputing the throne of Sicily with Tancred.

¹²⁹ The Thirty Years' War had not yet taken its toll on Germany and the Emperor enjoyed a fairly discretionary power over his vassals.

¹³⁰ Absolutely phenomenal fortune at the time. To be convinced of this, it is enough to think that Robert Courteuse agreed to renounce the throne of England for the already very large sum of 3,000 marks of silver.

¹³¹ Because in theory, the Emperor, at the head of the Holy Roman Empire, had sovereignty over everything that had been the Roman Empire, including England, as a descendant of Charlemagne. Philip Augustus, King of France, was Richard the Lionheart's overlord for his continental duchies.

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the English ploughmen, who had already been reduced to starvation by their contemptuous barons. Released by the Emperor of Germany at the beginning of February 1194¹³², Richard the Lionheart arrived in England on 13 March and then returned to Normandy. Frightened by the approach of his violent brother Richard, and wanting to justify his close collaboration with the King of France, John Lackland decided to betray the French in order to win the pardon of his royal brother.

Strategy or tactics : Ruse. Cunning¹³³.

Summary of the action : John Lackland organized a large banquet in Evreux to which he invited 300 French men-at-arms *who were in his service*. He had taken care to hide 150 well-armed archers in adjoining rooms. When the French had eaten well and especially drunk well, the archers threw themselves on the unarmed guests and massacred them.

Casualties : 300 French men-at-arms.

Consequence of this assassination : Through this act, Richard the Lionheart and John Lackland were reconciled, though Richard still distrusted his brother (with some reason). Of course, it was the inhabitants of Evreux who paid for this crime that they had not committed. The King of France took the city and gave it up to the flames. Further proof that when the mighty fight, it's the little guys who suffer.

¹³² The English people had to pay a huge ransom to free their king Richard the Lionheart: 150,000 marks of silver, as much as the Inca king Atahualpa who, in 1532, offered Pizarro a room full of gold and two rooms of silver for his release [Pizarro did not keep his word and had the king executed despite the ransom]. Each of these ransoms is equivalent to approximately ten million US dollars in today's dollars. As for Richard, the English people were still being pulled to pay. Richard complained bitterly of this, laughing in his prison: "Many friends, but poor are their gifts;/Shame will have if, for want of ransom,/ Two winters I remain in prison." [Richard the Lionheart, 1157-1199, *Rotrou-enge of the Captive*].

¹³³ The idea of intoxicating the enemy with wine or food was not new, and, at the same time, we shall see, during the Hundred Years' War, Du Guesclin sending to meet a troop of English soldiers two wagons of excellent wine, which the latter seized by force, and, when they were intoxicated, the French fell on them and put them to the sword. In Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, a Chinese commentator named Ch'en Hao advised "to give the enemy young boys and women to turn his head, and jade and silk to excite his ambitions." [chap. I, *Approximations, commentary on Principle 23*]. There was something for everyone!

Siege of Exeter.

Date of the action : December 1067.

Location : Exeter is located in England, in Cornwall, 50°72', 03°52'

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Campaign of "pacification" or "reduction" of 1067.

Background : Seeing the turmoil in England during his stay in France, William the Bastard returned to England in early December. London was appeased by his promises, and he was able to undertake a punitive expedition to the West. He wanted to punish Exeter, whose inhabitants had just molested the French in the countryside, hired mercenaries and contracted anti-French alliances. Harold's mother had taken refuge there with her treasures and her sons. William assembled (for political and psychological purposes) an English auxiliary troop supervised by French officers to accompany his French knights, and set out on the march westwards, devastating everything in his path in the rebel region (scorched earth). Exeter had been, since the beginning of the invasion, a hotbed of anti-French agitation. The population was "hostile to all men of French blood or speech."

Leaders in attendance *William commanded the French.

Numbers engaged : In addition to the French knights and men-at-arms, William had with him, for political and propaganda reasons, a battalion of Englishmen who agreed to fight against their compatriots, either by conviction, or by force, misery, or for booty.

Strategy or tactics : First repeated assaults with climbing the walls using ladders. Finally, the wall was undermined by a mine and collapsed. For psychological purposes, the contingents of English auxiliaries were placed in the front line. The city was built on a low hill. The Exe River

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covered the southwest. To the north-east, a narrow isthmus bordered by ravines communicated the hill with a vast space of the same altitude. This isthmus was protected by the east gate. The wall followed the crest of the hill. Between the city and the Exe, there were probably swamps. Today, the river has been straightened and the meander that once encircled the town has disappeared.

Summary of the action : The French army halted five kilometers from Exeter. William summoned the inhabitants to capitulate. The latter sought a compromise : *"to pay taxes without recognizing him as king"*. But William, who wanted subjects more than money, demanded a full capitulation. Then the English magistrates (who had the most to lose from a refusal) came to capitulate; hostages were given, but the population refused to ratify the capitulation. Very angry, William had a hostage's eyes gouged out and began a murderous siege of 18 days. The French approached through the north-east isthmus. The city was under arms, the men on the walls. One of them committed a fatal error of uttering an insult against William the Bastard, who became furious and ordered the eyes of another hostage to be gouged out in front of the walls, in order to force the population to capitulate. But this cruel punishment determined the terrified English population to stop all insults but to resist even more. The French assaults lasted 18 days without interruption : climbing by ladders, throwing rocks. The French suffered heavy casualties, but English pro-French reinforcements arrived to fill the French gaps. Finally, the walls being too difficult to storm, the French dug a huge mine that undermined an entire wall. When a great breach opened in the collapsed wall, the English, fearing even more cruel reprisals, decided to capitulate unconditionally. Numerous acts of violence followed the surrender, in particular rapes. So much so that many women fled. Gytha¹³⁴, who was the soul and leader of this insurrection, fled before the arrival of the French, abandoning her fellow citizens to the fury of the French, before the arrival of the French through the breach in the wall. She fled from the façade overlooking the river, which was not supervised. In order to soften William the Bastard's anger, the doors were opened,

¹³⁴ Mother of Harold, the last king of the English race.

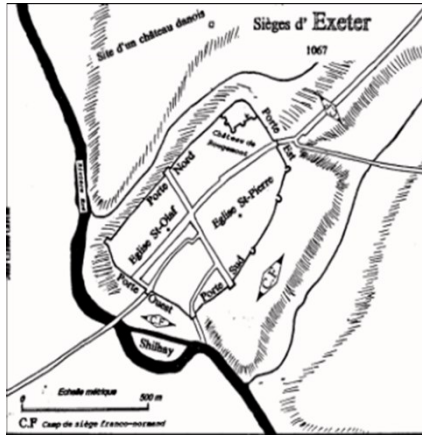
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and the whole population went out in religious procession, preceded by the priests with their sacred vestments. This effectively calmed the anger of the king, who forbade his French and English troops to plunder, rape and massacre.

Casualties : Very heavy on both sides.

As a consequence of this English defeat, Gytha, the Queen Mother suffered her final eviction. With the rocks of the hundred or so houses destroyed during the siege, the French built the *fortress of Rougemont* in the city. They placed a French garrison there, under the command of Gilbert Crespin, also called Gilbert de Brionne.

Cornwall and Devon were divided between French Lords.



Battle of Exeter [fortress of **Rougemont**].

Date of the action : end of July 1069

Location : City located in Cornwall, England. 50°72', 03°53'

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification or reduction campaign of 1069.

Background : In late July, two of Harold's sons appeared along the coast of England's Western Peninsula at the head of 65 ships carrying 500 insurgents. They sailed up the River Taw, landed and plundered Devonshire again, and then laid siege to Exeter. The English populations of Devonshire, reinforced by those of Cornwall¹³⁵, rose up again and appeared in arms under the walls of the French fortress of Rougemont at Exeter.

Leaders in attendance *Two of Harold's sons commanded the English rebels. *Briant led the French Relief Army.

Forces *English : 500 men-at-arms formed the core of the insurgent army. Some of the population joined them. *French : unknown numbers.

Strategy or tactics : When the besiegers were attacked by the relief army, the garrison made a sortie to take them from the rear. Caught between the jaws of this pincer, the English rebels fled.

Summary of the action : The siege lasted several weeks. Briant came to the aid of the fortress of Rougemont with French troops who supervised and watched over English auxiliaries. On seeing the arrival of help, the garrison of Exeter made a vigorous *sortie*. The besiegers retreated under the blows and fell on the swords of the relief army, which made a great massacre. The night saved the others. Harold's two sons, who were trying

¹³⁵ They were themselves victims of Robert de Mortain's exactions.

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to regain power for their own benefit, managed to flee, leaving the insurgents to their own problems.

Losses : Very heavy, especially on the English side: 1,700 English, Welsh and Irish were massacred.

Consequence of this English defeat : In the end, this insurrection showed that the citizens of the city of Exeter, tired of suffering reprisals for inconclusive and ill-prepared insurrections, not only gave no help to the insurgents, but lent a hand to the French. The cruel colonial policy of William the Bastard was beginning to bear fruit. This English defeat and the now pro-French reaction of the people of Exeter put an end to the hopes of the House of Godwine. No more were heard of Harold's sons¹³⁶.

Castle of Rougemont on the motte, in Exeter



¹³⁶ To punish those of the inhabitants of the region who had joined the insurgents, Geoffrey de Monbray, bishop of Coutances, came with the garrisons of London, Winchester and Salisbury, seized many suspects and mutilated them cruelly.

Siege and Battle of Exeter.

Date of the Action : 1070.

Localisation : 50°72'; 03°53'

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification or reduction campaign of 1070.

Background: William the Bastard¹³⁷ spent Christmas in the year 1069 at York. Early in 1070, while he was busy in the north, sporadic insurrections broke out throughout the country.

Leaders: French relief army was commanded by Guillaume Fitz-Osborne and Briant.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown.

Strategy or tactics : An ordinary pitched battle with melee, to which the combined attacks of the garrison must be added. Caught between these two pincer-type attacks, the insurgent English army quickly disintegrated. This reduction winter campaign was decided upon by William the Bastard, while at that time military operations usually ceased during this season.

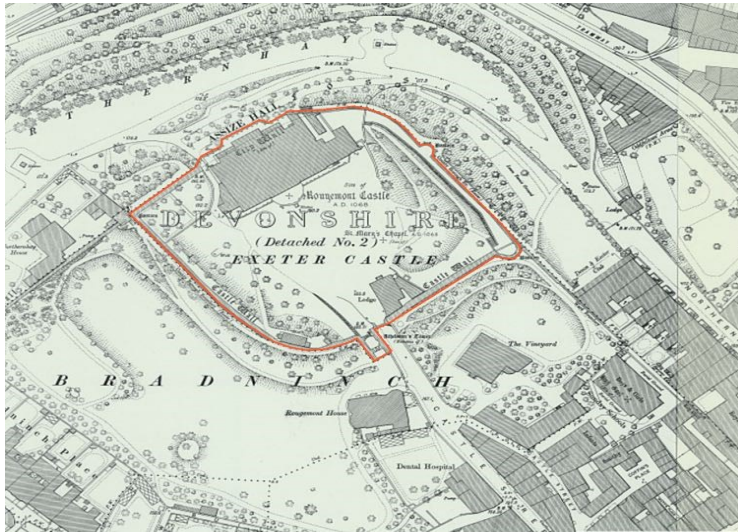
Summary of the action : The English from Devonshire and Cornwall came to lay siege to Exeter. A sudden exit of the French caused them to lift the siege and the discomfited rebels were cut to pieces by a column commanded by Counts Guillaume Fitz-Osborne and Briant, who had come to the relief of the city.

¹³⁷ Who had swapped his first nickname for: *The Conqueror*, more worthy of him. The sobriquet of illegitimacy was not considered infamous, as in contemporary times before the generalization of concubinage.

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Casualties : Heavy on the English side. This last winter of great insurrections caused 100,000 deaths on the English side.

The consequence of this English defeat : "Pacification" of the colonized country.



Location of Rougemont Castle in Exeter City center.

Battle of La Ferrière-sur-Risle.

Date of the Action : 1136

Location : Village in the canton of Goms, Eure, France. 48°97'; 00°78'.

Conflict : War of the Succession of England [Henry I].

Context : On the death of Henry I of England¹³⁸, Roger de Tosny declared himself in favour of Geoffrey d'Anjou¹³⁹, while Galéran de Meulan and his brother Robert de Leycester¹⁴⁰ took the side of King Étienne [Stephen]. At the very beginning of May 1136, Roger took the English fortress of Verneuil, but three days later Galéran re-took the place at the head of the Rouen people. On Pentecostal Monday [Whit Monday], Galéran came to burn Acquigny with a strong army. The very next day, Roger burned three villages for him. Galéran and Robert asked for the help of Thibault, Count de Blois. The armies of Galéran and Robert burned Bougy with its church, but on the same day Richer de Laigle and Auvray de Verneuil were routed at La Ferrière-sur-Risle by Robert de Bellesme and his French knights of Roger's party. This was how the Nobles fought among themselves, setting fire to villages belonging to their enemy, killing their peasants, stealing their herds of cattle, sheep and pigs, and raping their peasant women. All this misery to impoverish them.

Leaders **pro-English party* was led by the Lords Richer de Laigle and Auvray de Verneuil. *The *pro-French party* by Robert de Bellesme.

Troops engaged : probably only a few hundred soldiers.

¹³⁸ One of the sons of William the Conqueror.

¹³⁹ Of the pro-French party.

¹⁴⁰ All of these antagonists were local lords, but some owned property in England, which forced them to take sides with one or the other.

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Strategy or tactics : According to a local tradition, there was on the heights overlooking the current town, an important agglomeration called the Upper Towns, to the east of the city. Near the slag deposits, one can see, perfectly drawn, the traces of an old fortified castle. We can imagine by thought¹⁴¹ this little fortress with its double enclosure of ditches and palisades, its tower and its keep. Built on an eminence with steep slopes ; it dominated a large part of the valley, from Saint-Aubin to Grosley, and from the top of its watchtower, the watchman could easily monitor all the surrounding country. Each combatant fought a singular combat without any idea of an overall manoeuvre.

Summary of the action : Richer de Laigle and Auvray de Verneuil, enemies of Roger de Tosny, were passing with their English-Norman troops in front of La Ferrière, when they were violently attacked by Robert de Belesme and Malvoisin, sire de Boissi, as well as by the other French knights, who routed them after inflicting serious losses on them.

Casualties : Probably a few killed and a larger number of prisoners for ransom.

The consequence of these battles : This capture at last restored security to the peasants of the neighborhood. After this victory over the English party, Roger set about devastating the area around Vaudreuil [on October 3rd]. He burned the church of Saint-Étienne du Vouvray. On the same day, Saturday, October 3rd, he was returning, overloaded with his booty and encumbered with prisoners, when Galéran and Henri de La Pommeraye came out of the neighboring forest and, with their 500 horsemen, showed themselves ready to fight. Roger had only a few marauders with him, for he had sent forward to Acquigny, Guillaume and Roger Le Bègue with their troops, booty and prisoners. His honor as a knight forced him to support the charge, and he succumbed to numbers. He was taken prisoner.

¹⁴¹ Tellier said.

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Battle of Fréteval.

Date of the Action : 1154.

Location : Near Fréteval, in the Vendômois, France. The village is located 2 km to the S.-W. of the Morea and 18 km north of Vendôme. 47.88958, 1.18655; It was in 1170 that the *Entrevue of Fréteval* took place between the same two kings¹⁴².

Conflict : Feudal war between the King of France and his vassal, the powerful Duke of Normandy, who happened to be King of England.

Context : The King of England, Henry II, wanted to take revenge on Thibault V, Count de Blois, who had killed his ally Sulpice d'Amboise in torture. Henry II. assembled his troops at Vendôme, the place which then belonged to him, and marched on Fréteval.

Leaders in attendance *French: unknown. *English: King Henry II.

Number of personnel engaged : unknown.

Strategy or tactics : Ambush with mass attack, with no idea of maneuver. The battle was reduced to single combat between knights and men-at-arms. The city was fortified, on the banks of the Seine. The castle consisted of three polygonal, almost circular enclosures, concentrically surrounding the keep. On the side of the plateau, where the escarpments are lacking, a ditch 25 to 30 m wide was the first defense. Behind, on a terrace, stood the first enclosure, a simple un-flanked wall, enclosing a chapel, dwellings, etc. The average diameter of this enclosure was 140 meters; two parallel walls united it to the bridge over the River Loir, at the place where an old mill now stands. On the other side of the river, the

¹⁴² Henry II of England and Louis VII of France. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket or Becket, who had taken refuge in France to escape the wrath of his king, was reconciled with Henry II. But this was only a ruse by the king to lure Thomas to England and assassinate him.

large, fortified town of Fréteval served as a bridgehead. A new ditch, about 12 m wide, and a wall, 1.50 m thick, formed the second enclosure, with a diameter of about 70 m, the entrance to which probably opened through a tower. All that remains of this tower is the foundations. Opposite the door, on the inner side, an embankment, in the shape of a crescent, served as an obstacle to break the momentum of the attackers. The third enclosure, or rampart of the keep [of the donjon], with a diameter of about 30 m, was a wall 1.10 m thick, flanked by a cylindrical turret which also served to protect the entrance. The keep formed a cylinder 15 m in diameter outside the work, the height of which must have been up to 30 m. Its walls, 2.5 m thick, were built of hard stone blocks¹⁴³, bound by an excellent reddish mortar, mixed with fine gravel. A well and chimneys with conical hoods completed the installation. Halfway up the ground floor, an opening probably marks the location of the door, which could only be accessed by a ladder or a wooden bridge that could easily be burned by defenders in the event of an attack or a siege.

Summary of the Action : Coming out of the marshes of Chicherau, on the plain of Linières, the English army of Henry II met the garrison of Fréteval who attacked the English troops and completely defeated them after a long and furious battle. The road that led to Fréteval then followed the left bank of the River Loir, passing in front of the manors of Meslay and Chicherau. From Chicherau to the plain of Lignères, the road was only a narrow *causeway*¹⁴⁴ in the midst of marshy meadows, bordered on one side by the Loir, on the other by steep hillsides covered with woods. The garrison of Fréteval suddenly attacked the Anglo-Vendôme army at the exit of this dangerous defile, overthrew it into the marshes and routed it. The English King Henry II succeeded in fleeing to Vendôme; his brother Geoffrey was taken, with a great number of his bravest knights, and conducted to the tower of Chateaudun.

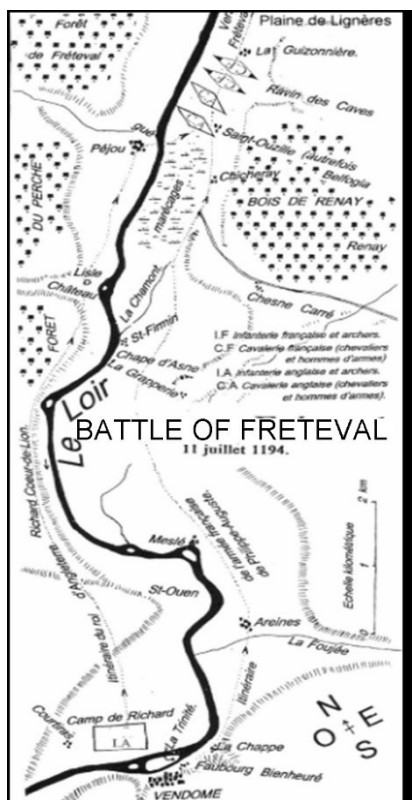
Losses : quite significant on the English side. The knights were taken prisoners for ransom. As usual, the poor infantrymen, unable to pay ransom, were mercilessly slaughtered.

¹⁴³ A blockage is formed of materials of different sizes, thrown pell-mell into a mortar bath.

¹⁴⁴ Or embankment road

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As a result of this English defeat , the King of England managed to escape to Vendôme, but his brother remained a prisoner of the Earl of Blois. To redeem it, Henry II of England was obliged to cede Chaumont to this earl who had the fortress razed to the ground. Four years later, in 1158, a treaty was concluded between Louis VII of France and Henry II of England, by which Fréteval was restored to Henry II. The ruined fortress thus passed from the hands of the Earl of Blois to those of the King of England.



Battle of Fréteval.

Other name : Vendôme.

Date of the action : 11 July 1194.

Location : The battlefield is located in a place called Beaufeux, 4 km from Fréteval, between Lignières and Pezou, on the very site where the battle of 1154 took place. Fréteval is in the Vendômois, France. The village is located 2 km to the S.-W. of the Morea and 18 km north of Vendôme. 47.86536, 1.16241

Conflict : Feudal wars between the King of France and the King of England, who was the vassal of the King of France in relation to his continental duchies only, but not as King of England.

Background : Richard the Lionheart, son of King Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine, had become King of England in 1189. In 1191, he went on crusade. During his absence, Philippe-Auguste began to seize English strongholds on the continent, aided by John Lackland (the Landless), the jealous brother of Richard the Lionheart. Richard returned in 1194 to wage war and retake the places that the French had taken from him in Normandy, Maine, Beauce and Touraine. The skirmish at Fréteval deserves to be mentioned for a reason that has nothing to do with the military. Philippe-Auguste, King of France, then at war with Richard the Lionheart, marched on Vendôme and easily occupied the city, which was not fortified. But the castle, defended by an English garrison, put up a vigorous resistance and it was necessary to lay siege to it. Richard, who was in Touraine, immediately advanced to raise the siege, and came to pitch his camp on the plain opposite the city. But Philippe, whose situation suddenly became critical, being cornered in a defenseless place between an enemy's camp and a fortified castle, made his preparations for departure in secret. Before daybreak, he left the town by the faubourg Saint-Bienheure, took the road on the left bank of the River Loir which

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led to Fréteval by following the valley via Areines, Meslay and Chicheray. His project was doubtless to carry off Fréteval by surprise, while his enemy waited for him in vain under the walls of Vendôme.

Chiefs in attendance *The kings of France and England : Richard the Lionheart and Philippe-Auguste.

Numbers engaged : Unknown with certainty, probably 1,500 or 2,000 on both sides.

Strategy or tactics : Ambush. Fréteval probably played an important role at this time in the defense of the approaches to Vendôme and in the blocking of the Loir valley.

Summary of the action : One day when Philippe, King of France, was about to pass near Fréteval, Richard was informed of it. He set out in the night, followed the right bank of the Loir, crossed that river at the ford of Pejou, and placed himself in ambush with a large company of knights. He hid his soldiers in the *Ravine of the Caves* and in the woods that covered the hillside, near a village of the time, Belfogia¹⁴⁵, and waited in the greatest silence for the arrival of the French. The latter soon appeared, not caring for caution, to cross this dangerous passage. Philippe-Auguste's safety was so uncertain that he left the main body of his troops with his principal knights to go to lunch and hear mass in a neighboring castle¹⁴⁶. The French, having to halt at the *hamlet of Belfogia*, were beginning to lay down their arms and unbridle their horses, when Richard, emerging from his ambush, fell unexpectedly upon this crowd, half unarmed and destitute of leaders. The French were completely routed, and Philippe-Auguste, who learned at the same time of the attack and the defeat, managed to escape Richard's pursuit and run to shut himself up within the walls of Chateaudun.

As a result of this French defeat , Richard managed to seize a wagon drawn by beasts of burden. This cart carried the ornaments of the crown,

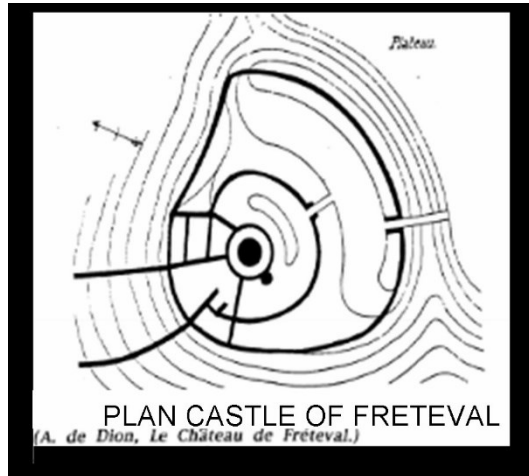
¹⁴⁵ Today Saint-Ouzille.

¹⁴⁶ Probably Lisle.

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the seals, and above all the complete Registers of the Kingdom of France in which were noted the taxes due by some, the privileges of others, the corvées of peasants, etc. Reconstructing all these documents took a long time. From this period dates the foundation by Philippe-Auguste of the *Archives de la Couronne* or *Trésor des Chartes*.

The lesson had served him well.



Siege of Gasny.

Date of the Action : 1118.

Location : Eure, on the River Epte, at an altitude of 36m. Old Gasny was probably an island. Geographical coordinates: 49°09'; 01°60'.

Conflict : Feudal War of the English Succession, 1091 - 1106.

Context : The impatience of the eldest King's son, Robert Curthose, was about to turn against him. By the time William died (1087), Robert had rebelled several times against his father, and had been exiled as a result. On his deathbed, William the Conqueror had asked that his second son¹⁴⁷ should become King of England. In fact, it was William Rufus (Le Roux), 3rd son, who rushed to England as soon as he learned of his father's death, and had himself crowned King of England¹⁴⁸ by Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury¹⁴⁹. Henri Beauclerc, the youngest son, received compensation of 5,000 silver marks for relinquishing his birthright (almost a plate of lentils). The eldest, Robert Curthose, hastened back to Normandy and was recognized as Duke Robert II. According to Azimov, "it was, after all, an equitable division if the kingdom were to be divided. It may seem that the third had gotten the better share, with the highest title and the largest territory, but that was not the

¹⁴⁷ His youngest, Richard.

¹⁴⁸ Under the name of William II.

¹⁴⁹ Moine bénédictin, Lanfranc fut conseiller du duc Guillaume le Bâtard. Né à Pavie (Germanic Holy Roman Empire), il émigra en France et devint maître à l'école d'Avranches en Normandie. Il entra, vers 1042, à l'abbaye du Bec dont il fut élu Abbé. Au moment des faits que nous relatons, il était archevêque de Canterbury depuis le 15 août 1070. Il mourut à Canterbury. He died in 1089.

way to see things at the time. The [French] province of Normandy was the main colonizing operator, the "imperialist" kingdom¹⁵⁰. "England was a land peopled with sullen serfs¹⁵¹." But it was still true that not only the sons of William the Bastard, but the barons themselves, wanted the two countries under one and only leader ; the sons of the Conqueror wanted that *out of ambition*, provided that they were the ones at the head, of course, and the "barons", because they owned lands on both sides of the English Channel. and they realized that if the two countries went to war with each other, they would find themselves in an extremely uncomfortable position, as they would be forced to violate one of the two oaths of allegiance they had sworn to the two enemy potentates. Thus, when William Rufus, King of England, began to consider plans to invade Normandy, it was mainly his barons¹⁵² who opposed it. Rufus then had to mobilize his Anglo-Saxon serfs. They all hated the French barons who imposed heavy taxes on them, on land and miscellaneous, just to lead their princely lifestyle, and used violence to force them to submit. To better induce his Anglo-Saxon serfs to obey without hesitation at this crucial moment, William Rufus promised them concessions¹⁵³. The only one of the four sons who had obtained nothing from the partition, except 5,000 silver marks, was the youngest of the

¹⁵⁰ In any case, this is how Normandy would have been described in the terminology created in the twentieth century, during the Cold War.

¹⁵¹ Asimov, Isaac, *The Shaping of England*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston [USA] 1969. Page 172.

¹⁵² Nickname of members of the High Nobility of England. They were led by Odo, bishop of Bayeux and half-brother of William the Bastard. Odo had fought bravely at Hastings, but not with a sword; He had used a sledgehammer because his status as a religion forbade him to shed blood! It was the art of doing as one pleases and violating "the substance" while respecting "the form".

¹⁵³ Which he did not grant them afterwards. This fact resembles the grotesque promises of emancipation made by the English military authorities to slaves in the West Indies. During the French Revolution, the British army recruited slaves as soldiers in order to fight against the republican anti-slavery [French] fighters who were fighting alongside the insurgent slaves.

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family, Henri Beauclerc¹⁵⁴. He hoped, of course, that when his brother William Le Roux [Rufus or the Red], King of England, died, he would get something. It seems that he then hatched a very simple plan. There was in England a royal forest called *The New Forest*, because it had been planted by William the Conqueror himself for his private hunts. It lay not far from his favourite hunting residence at Winchester, the former Anglo-Saxon capital of Alfred the Great [871-899]. Beforehand, William had taken care to expel the English population from the region, then he had razed and burnt the buildings, without any compensation. He remained totally indifferent to the sufferings he created. The entire Region¹⁵⁵, of about 1,500km², was returned to the forest for the well-being and recreation of His Majesty. The superstitious Anglo-Saxons began to whisper that the New Forest was haunted by the Devil¹⁵⁶ and that he [or it] would punish the French there, in this forest. Indeed, Richard, second son of William the Bastard, died there in a hunting accident during the Conqueror's lifetime. Then in May 1100, another Richard, illegitimate son of Robert Curthose of Normandy, was also killed there in a similar hunting accident.

In August 1100, shortly after this last tragedy, William Rufus (Le Roux) organized a large hunting party. His younger brother Henry, the disinherited, was invited. As William was unmarried and had no children, Henry was the direct heir to the Crown¹⁵⁷ in the event of the Sovereign's death; first in the list of pretenders to the throne. During this hunting party, William Rufus was accompanied in the New Forest by a companion of pleasure named Gauthier Tirel¹⁵⁸. The official version later

¹⁵⁴ The most intelligent and educated, hence his name. At the time, clerics were the only ones [or almost] who knew how to read and write.

¹⁵⁵ A region larger than Lac Saint-Jean in Quebec, which extends over 1350km². In France, it could be compared to ten times the surface area of the island of Oléron. William razed 60 villages to create the New Forest in Hampshire, which was forbidden to peasants.

¹⁵⁶ It would seem logical to think that the curse was subsequent to the series of accidents or crimes.

¹⁵⁷ On the condition that the Duke of Normandy, Robert Curthose, remained in the Holy Land, of course, or that Henry was crowned before his return. He had just received news that Robert, in excellent health, had made his way home.

¹⁵⁸ The English have anglicized his name to Walter Tyrrel.

reported that *an arrow shot by Gauthier was accidentally deflected from its trajectory by a tree, and that it went, by the most unfortunate of chances, to plunge into the heart of the King of England, William Rufus, who died on the spot. Abandoning the remains of his victim in the forest, Tirel immediately fled to the coast of the English Channel, embarked on a ship, passed through Normandy and then into another province of France, and finally went to get lost in the Holy Land where vengeance – if there was vengeance¹⁵⁹ – could no longer reach him. The king's body was not found until much later by an Anglo-Saxon peasant who brought it back to Winchester. Henry, who seemed to have surprisingly quick reflexes, immediately seized the Royal Treasury, and, three days later, had himself crowned King of England under the name of Henry the First. Arriving from the Holy Land, Robert Curthose once again found his place in this *royal game of musical chairs*. Henry, the poor dispossessed man whom everyone had hitherto looked down upon, was the King. Little Robert¹⁶⁰ had again been tricked. In 1101, Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy, began to invade England but soon realized that the barons and the Church supported Henry¹⁶¹. He therefore accepted 3,000 silver marks to renounce the throne of England¹⁶² and returned, pitifully and reluctantly, to Normandy where he began to intrigue against the King of England, his wiser brother, and to sow discord among the idle barons. Then, in 1106, it was Henry who crossed the Channel, and on 26 September a battle took place at Tinchebray, 60 km south of Bayeux. Henry had invested (begun the siege of) the town of Tinchebray and Robert Curthose tried to get him to lift the siege. At the end of the fight, Robert Curthose was taken prisoner and placed under house arrest in England, on probation, until his death in 1134. During this battle was also taken*

¹⁵⁹ Or an attempt at elimination, because Tirel may have known far too much about the Duke of Normandy's family interactions. Tirel and the king were alone at the scene of the crime-accident; and as the same Tirel disappeared forever, how could the official version be established? And how do we know that Tirel went to get lost in the Middle East... Did he really go?

¹⁶⁰ Robert Courteheuse (Curthose)= short thigh or courtcuisse.

¹⁶¹. Who had hastened to buy them with gifts in order to strengthen his throne. But in any case, the barons, who had lands on both sides of the Channel, did not want to fight against the king who could confiscate their lands.

¹⁶² This saved his face. It should be noted that Henry had received 5000 pounds to renounce the throne.

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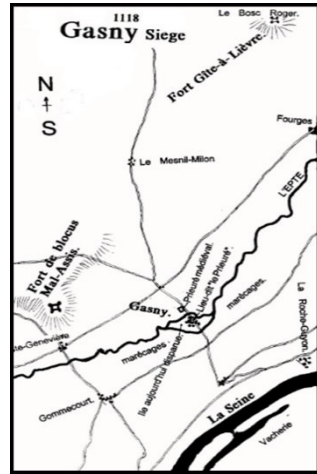
prisoner Edgar the Atheling, grandson of Edmund Ironside (Cotte-de-fer), a Saxon reminiscence of an already distant past.

As a result of Henry's victory, he was accepted by the barons of Normandy —unwilling to persist in the camp of a loser— as Duke of Normandy.

Leaders in attendance *King Henry I of England ; *King Louis the Fat (Le Gros) of France. Foulques III Nerra, [a.k.a. *le Faucon Noir*] Comte d'Anjou.

Troops engaged : 2 to 3,000 men.

Strategy or tactics : Cunning played a big role, a French group of soldiers [we would say a "*commandos*" "*special forces*" or "*raiders*" today¹⁶³] disguised themselves as *monks* to take over the city. The Epte, which was a border river, was lined on both sides with surveillance fortresses of which many vestiges remain: e.g.: Château-sur-Epte, on the English side, 15km from Gasny ; La Roche-Guyon, on the French side, 4 km from Gasny. On the English side, the castles were of an identical model, a round keep adjoining a circular enclosure. Gasny was probably a place where the Epte was forded thanks to an island (now gone) between two branches of the river. Legend has it that the name Gasny comes from "*Gué de Nicaise*"¹⁶⁴". The agglomeration then spread to the right bank of the River Epte, except in any case, the barons, who had land on both sides of the Channel, did not want to fight against the King who could confiscate their flood-prone lands. Raids were frequent from fortress to fortress. It seems that the action of 1118 was carried out by French troops from La Roche-Guyon who wanted to control the passage across the river. Of the two forts, the *Mal-*



¹⁶³ 'Foragers' long ago, for they used to go burning the fodder of the enemy's army, and thus they gained 'fouragères' as rewards.

¹⁶⁴ This seems to D. Léonard (who communicated these data to the author of this work) quite questionable.

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Assis [Poorly-seated] and the *Gîte-à-Lièvre* [Hare-burrow], can still be seen the traces covered with dirt and totally forgotten today in Sainte-Geneviève-lès-Gasny and Bosc-Roger.

Summary of the action : In 1118, Louis VI the-Fat of France, marched on Gasny with a small force. It was a tolerably safe place, thanks to the waters which surrounded it on all sides, and then to its church, which was fortified by a strong belltower. Louis the-Fat first brought in a few soldiers disguised as monks; then, following them, he penetrated to the center of the square and took it by surprise. The King of England, Henry I Beauclerc, rushed and had immediately two forts built on two neighbouring eminences which were to house the archers and crossbowmen. The French derisively called them, one *Mal-Assis* and the other *Gîte-à-Lièvre*. Fort Mal-Assis was attacked by the French, who expelled the English from it. Part of the territory of Sainte-Geneviève-lès-Gasny has kept the name of Mal-Assis.

The consequence of this English defeat : derisory, like many sieges in the Middle Ages. Let us also mention the *Battle of Alençon* [December 1118] between the Anglo-Normans led by King Henry of England and the Franco-Angevins of Foulques. Details are rare¹⁶⁵.

Foulques besieged Alençon with *mounted* men-at-arms and infantry. He made it a line to stop King Henry Beauclerc's relief army. The latter formed two divisions : *the first* of Theobald and Stephen, which brought together the most combative men-at-arms. *The second* formation, numerically larger, was under the direct orders of the King of England; it brought together a larger number of infantrymen. The first division immediately attacked and passed the King's division to throw itself on the French. Foulques' men-at-arms repulsed the attack by inflicting heavy losses in killed and prisoners. It was then that Foulques counter-attacked at the head of his mounted men-at-arms, shouting, "*Follow me!*", putting the English to flight. Foulques had succeeded in keeping his whole army in hand, while the King of England had allowed his first division to act uncoordinated. As a result of his victory, Foulques was able to take Alençon and Henry of England had to make peace.

¹⁶⁵ Only the *Chronicles of the Counts of Anjou*, pages 155-161, mention this action in some detail.

Siege of Gerberoy

Date of the action : early January 1079.

Location : Located on the border of Vexin and Beauvaisis. Gerberoy was in the territory of the King of France. 49°53'; 1°84'

Conflict : War between William I the Conqueror, King of England, and one of his sons, Robert Curthose¹⁶⁶.

Context : The Wars of Colonization and Pacification of England had ended in 1072. William then lived from 1075 to 1083, across the Channel in his native Normandy he loved. Disagreement soon arose between William and his children. Like the "prodigal son" of the Bible, Robert Curthose, of a very jealous character, wanted to receive immediately the patrimony that was to be attributed to him by his father : the continental province of Normandy. The eldest [Robert] was therefore to inherit Normandy and the second¹⁶⁷ England. Robert then revolted against his father William the Bastard and found himself obliged to flee abroad : to Flanders, Germany, Aquitaine, the East and the South. For five years he lived without doing anything, aided by the secret subsidies of his mother, Queen Mathilde, who thus incurred the tenacious grudge of her husband. Then, Robert took refuge in Île-de-France, in Gerberoy, on the edge of the Vexin Province, where he gathered a troop of French and barons from Normandy. In accordance with *the policy of divide and rule*, King Philippe Ist of France encouraged Robert in his struggle against his father by pretending to consider him the legitimate Duke of this French province of Normandy. He therefore lent Robert the magnificent fortress of Gerberoy which, "by its position on a mound, by its high walls, by its bastions, in short, was an almost impregnable place of defense¹⁶⁸."

¹⁶⁶ Short boot, "short thigh". He was small.

¹⁶⁷ Guillaume Le Roux or William II.

¹⁶⁸ Ordéric Vital. Books III, IV, and V - Conquests of England and Southern Italy. Vital was a French monk who settled in England.

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Leaders *William I the Conqueror commanded the Anglo-Norman army.
*Robert Curthose and finally the King of France, led the Franco-Norman troops.

Troops engaged *Robert Curthose commanded 2,000 Frenchmen. The King of France arrived with a larger army of unknown numbers.

Strategy or tactics : Gerberoy is located on a hill 188 meters above sea level. William settled on a nearby hill located 1.2 km from the city, *Mount Porcher* [176 meters]. Gerberoy was then surrounded by a double enclosure of high walls reinforced by numerous towers and surmounted by a keep. On this mountain, William set up his siege camp. He had pits dug, some of which, located in the forest, are still visible at the end of the twentieth century. Those located in the fields have been levelled for the needs of agriculture. A pit, at the south-western tip of the wood, measures 20 meters by 7 or 8 meters, and 3 meters deep. Some pits were oblong and others circular. These pits were lined with wooden defenses, palisades behind which archers [oblong pits] or lookouts entrenched themselves on top of towers of tree trunks [circular pits]. The camp was rectangular with alleys lined with leather tents and siege engines: prefabricated towers, rocking rams, mangonels [catapults]... The city was blocked. The actions were limited to cavalry fights between knights and men-at-arms on the plain facing the fortress. Before the affair of Gerberoy, the battle of Dol took place [November 1076], of which very few details are known. At Dol, the English army commanded by William was defeated, suffered heavy losses in men and equipment, and had to retreat precipitately before the French.

Summary of the action : William raised an army and landed at Dieppe on Boxing Day 1078. Then he marched on Gerberoy. In two days he was at Gournay-en-Bray, from where he moved to the hill of Mont Porcher to undertake the siege of Gerberoy. But it was necessary to cross a sector of French territory to reach this fortified city. *This was a pretext of war.* The King of France had no standing army and it took him more than a fortnight to gather his vassals; but Robert Curthose had a solid army at

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his service. It was formed from mercenaries recruited in Île-de-France, Picardy and beyond, as well as Normandy knights. In all, 2,000 men. Gerberoy, with its double enclosure, covered more than five hectares. During the three weeks of siege, there were only cavalry fights on the plain of Songeons, Wambez, and Hanvoile. At Songeons, Guillaume tried to cut off the Gerberoy-Amiens road. Wambez was only a fight with no future. Hanvoile was an incursion by Robert into the rear of Guillaume. The forces were equal and the fighting was without decision. But the arrival of the King of France was to precipitate events. The King of France intervened by cutting off William's retreat to Gournay. There was no direct confrontation between King Philippe of France and King William of England. The threat alone is enough, perhaps accompanied by an *ultimatum*. William immediately lifted the siege, abandoned Gerberoy, and retreated to Gournay.

Casualties : Unknown; probably quite low on either side.

As a consequence of this English defeat , the prestige of the famous King of England suffered a little. And his rebellious son took advantage of it.

In the maze of feudal ties, Little Britain (to distinguish Brittany from Great Britain, the island) remained claimed by both England and France from the early Middle Ages until the moment when it fell into French hands. In fact, in 1532, the States of Brittany asked to be annexed to France. This union was sanctioned by the Edict of Plessis-Macé. As a result, French Brittany never had to suffer the ethnic cleansing suffered by its Irish and Scottish sisters at the hands of England: Scotland in the eighteenth century, when the expulsions of populations were carried out under economic pretext and cover (Highland Clearances), and Ireland in the nineteenth century, during the potato crisis. when the English government of Lord Russell not only refused to help Irish Catholics, but also refused to use the wheat produced in Ireland (and exported to England) to feed the starving population, which died by the hundreds of thousands. The Anglo-Protestant lords took advantage of this shortage to demolish the houses of Irish people who could not pay their rents, forcing them to emigrate to any English colonies. The aim was to repopulate Ireland with Anglo-Protestant subjects. Whole families of 12 to 15 people slept and died in the fields, in the rain. Hundreds of thousands of corpses caused epidemics of typhus, cholera and smallpox. Immigrants brought these diseases to Canada. England was almost satisfied; the population of Ireland fell from 8 million to 4 million.



Raid on Guernsey.

Date of the action : 1 April 1296.

Location : Island in the English Channel. Geographical coordinates : 49°45;02°59'.

Conflict : Feudal war between the kings of France and England, the latter being, just for his continental possessions, the vassal of the former.

Context : The year 1296 was spent at sea hijacking ships. But on 15 January 1296, an English fleet landed an army in Guyenne to maintain the continental blockade. This army met the 10,000 men of the Grand-Maître des Arbalétriers Jean de Brûlas, and the captain of the Naval Army of the Gironde, Oudart de Montbuisson, covering Bordeaux. A battle took place in which the English army gained the upper hand.

Strategy or tactics : Deciding to make the "continental blockade" of England, like Napoleon, Philippe IV *the Fair* [le Bel] replaced battles with treaties. The diplomacy of Philip IV the Fair isolated the English from Cape Europa to the North Cape, from Sicily to the Baltic, a blockade barely interrupted on the coast of Guyenne. The treaties¹⁶⁹ made in 1295 held back the foreign fleets for an invasion of England in the spring of 1296. Even the Hanseatic League undertook not to buy English wool or leather¹⁷⁰.

Summary of the action : Philippe the Fair then threw into the "Anglo-philic Gap of Guyenne", the army of Robert d'Artois and the squadron of Othon de Toucy¹⁷¹ which left Cherbourg for this purpose on 1st April. On

¹⁶⁹ Between Jayme of Aragon and Philip on 23 June 1295, on 21 October with Eric VI of Norway and Sweden, on 23 October with Scotland.

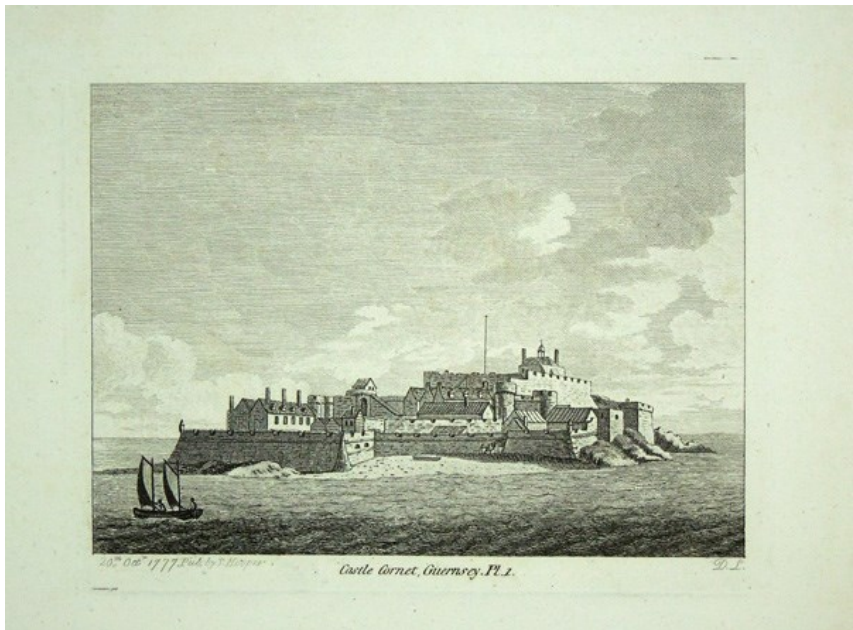
¹⁷⁰ The *Hanseatic League* [equivalent to the English *Cinque Ports League*] was a group of port cities in northern Germany and Baltic countries (Hamburg, Bremen, Luebeck, Elblag, Thorun, Tallinn, Riga, Tartu, Novgorod...) 20 galleys and galiots.

¹⁷¹ 20 galleys and galiots.

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the very day of this departure, this French squadron landed at Guernsey some troops who destroyed the quay of Saint-Pierre-Port and occupied for a short time the Château-Cornet, then, after that, the squadron came to blockade by sea the English strongholds of the Gironde.

As a result of this English setback , the island remained in French hands for a time.



Battle of Hastings.

Other name : Battle of Senlac.

Date of the action : 14 October 1066.

Location : 11 km from Hastings, the hill of Senlac, the site of the battle, blocks Route 21, just south of the small town of Battle, in the Southeast of England. 50.85787, 0.57425.



Here's the Battle of Hastings or Senlac (named after the hill) in perspective. The English are entrenched at the top of Senlac hill. William the Bastard's French army is at the foot of the hill. The contingents from Brittany form the two battalions of the French Left wing, the contingents from the Province of Normandy form the three battalions of the Center, and the contingents from the rest of France form the four battalions of the French Right wing. The human mass at the rear was made up of pedestrians, varlets, pages, carts and charettes, luggage... (Priv.Coll.)

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Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Invasion and Campaign of 1066.

Background : From the sixth century BC to the eleventh century AD, many peoples tried to invade the island, which is now called Great Britain as opposed to [little] Britain (Brittany), that of the French. Some succeeded: the first known were the Celts, so proud that the Romans called them the Gauls (the Roosters) on the continent. They overwhelmed [from the sixth to the fourth centuries B.C.] the primitive population of Mediterranean [Ibero-Ligurian] origin that then populated Great Britain. The Celts came from the southwest of present-day Germany. Then it was the Romans who, for nearly five centuries, dominated the island except for its northern part [Scotland]. Then came the Angles and the Saxons, Germanic populations originating from *Schleswig* [the Saxons] and *Holstein* [the Angles]. The Celtic populations were pushed back to the peripheral mountainous areas: Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Cornwall, and even to French Brittany. It was the Angles who gave their name to "England". From the eighth century, the latter were themselves confronted by the Vikings, then subjugated by the French of William the Bastard.

In 1066, on the death of Edward the Confessor, Harold Godwinson became (without delay, knowing that a French prince wanted to seize the crown of England), King of England. But William the Bastard, duke of Normandy, pretended that Harold had promised him the throne of England. As convincing "proof" to support his claims, William the Bastard gathered an army of nobles and adventurers from all over "France", to whom he promised property in England. On 29 September, the invading army landed on the English coast, at Pevensey, unopposed because King Harold was busy waging war in the north of the country where the King of Norway, Harold Hardrada, who himself coveted the throne of England, had landed. As soon as they landed, the French marched on the small town of Hastings and established an entrenched camp surrounded by a palisade flanked by two towers. After defeating the King of Norway at the Battle of Stamfordbridge, the King of England hastened to meet the French. The battle took place not far

from Hastings, on the Senlac plateau. But before going any further, it would be good to know the exact context that led to this French invasion of England.

At the death of King Canute [1035], several possibilities were offered to occupy the throne of England. Indeed, the old King Ethelred II had two children by Queen Emma. While the latter had remained in England as Canute's wife, the two children (Edward and Alfred) had been exiled to the French province of Normandy with their uncle Richard II, Duke of Normandy. At the beginning of Canute's reign, Richard II of Normandy had wanted to claim the throne of England for Edward, the eldest child of Ethelred II, but he soon realized that there would be no question of it as long as Canute lived. The two young princes had therefore continued to live out their exile in the French Normandy. These two children, half-Saxons by ancestry, had thus become quite French in sentiment and choice through cultural assimilation. Edmund Ironside [Cotte-de-Fer]¹⁷², the eldest son of Ethelred II¹⁷³, had had a very short reign. He had also fathered two sons, Edmond and Edward. All this made too many pretenders for the throne of England. These last two children had therefore also been exiled from the country at the death of Ironside, and they lived in peace in distant Hungary. As if four suitors were not enough, there were also the two sons of Canute. One was illegitimate¹⁷⁴. The other was called Hardicanut. It was a son of Emma¹⁷⁵, who, on the death of her husband, attempted to have him crowned king, with the support of Earl Godwin of Wessex¹⁷⁶. But the Nobility of the North, who did not want to see Godwin become too powerful, pushed the candidate Harold Harefoot¹⁷⁷. At the time of Canute's death, Hardicanut was in Denmark where he was trying to secure the throne of Denmark. He was slow to return to

¹⁷² Which will become in English: *Ironside*.

¹⁷³ Of a first bed.

¹⁷⁴ Harold Harefoot [Pied-de-Lièvre], so called perhaps because he ran fast. He had to, with so many ruthless competitors.

¹⁷⁵ Queen Emma had thus given birth, with the help of two kings [Ethelred and Canute], to four pretenders to the throne of England.

¹⁷⁶ The West Saxon kingdom, West Saxon. Godwin made and unmade kings until, as might be expected, he placed himself in the ranks of the suitors.

¹⁷⁷ Despite its illegitimacy, a big handicap at the time, except for William the Bastard who knew how to deal with it through violence.

England. Harold's party was thus able to win the race for the throne. In 1037, the latter was therefore elected King of England by the *witenagemot*¹⁷⁸ under the name of Harold I. Emma was exiled. Then Harold I¹⁷⁹ died, and Hardicanut then collected the crowns (England as well as Denmark); but he himself died only two years later. The longevity of the pretenders to the throne seemed very short; probably a consequence of internal rivalry wars between powerful noble families. With them ended the Danish dynasty of England, less than 30 years after the successful invasion of Sven at the Forkbeard¹⁸⁰. Neither Harold nor Hardicanut left any descendants. The princes exiled in Hungary were too far away. And what became of those exiled in French Normandy ? Richard II, their protector, had died in 1028 and his son, Robert I of Normandy, had taken over. The latter was far from behaving like a meek. In fact, his cruelty had caused him to be nicknamed Robert the Devil (Robert le Diable). The exiled English princes were his first cousins, and he tried to support them as his father had done. But when Robert the Devil, Duke of Normandy, died in 1035¹⁸¹, a certain anarchy developed in this French province. The youngest English prince¹⁸², exiled in Normandy, showed himself anxious to regain the throne of England, to which he had a claim through his father Ethelred II. And he made it known to those around him. Shortly after Harold I came to power, *Alfred the Exile* received a promising-looking message inviting him to come to England to overthrow the Danish monarch who reigned there. Who signaled it to him? We don't know, but it was a trap. Alfred raised a fleet at great expense, landed, and was received by Earl Godwin, who received him very amicably, with all due respect, offered him the warmest hospitality with a generosity worthy of the Saxon prince that he was, and, when he had won his confidence, in the style of today's Mafia... had him assassinated. All his numerous retinues were put to death. The game of *political chess* continued with passion. Of the two brothers exiled in French Normandy, there now

¹⁷⁸ Or Assembly of Councillors.

¹⁷⁹ In 1040, a brief career!

¹⁸⁰ Sven I with the Forkbeard, King of Denmark and England (960-1014).

¹⁸¹ So the same year as Canute of England.

¹⁸² Named Alfred and Frenchified.

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remained Edward, tranquil, mystical, called Edward the Confessor¹⁸³ because of his pronounced taste for religious things.

In 1041, he too was invited by Hardicanut¹⁸⁴ to return to England. The latter wanted to make him his heir because he had no descendants. Edward, who was almost 40 years old at the time, went to England; with (without a doubt) fear in his stomach. King Hardicanut, his half-brother, died in 1042, the following year. Earl Godwin, the same who had murdered Edward's brother, used his influence to favour Edward¹⁸⁵, who thus became King of England, 25 years after the death of his father Ethelred. Thus began the reign of the last Saxon king in the line of Alfred the Great.

On the throne, Edward behaved like a mystical monk. Only concerned with Heaven on this lowly earth, and doubtless persuaded that he would take care of his English subjects on earth when in Heaven. He was a manipulable individual *par excellence* in the low temporal domain. And it was the mighty Godwin, the true "*mayor of the palace*", who ruled England despite the fact that he had been the assassin of Alfred, the King's younger brother. Godwin was extremely powerful. In fact, he forced Edward the Confessor to marry his daughter Edith in 1045. He hoped to create a new dynasty, his own. Unfortunately for the cunning Godwin, the pious Edward had taken a *vow of chastity*, and he kept to it against all odds, so to speak. He therefore had no children¹⁸⁶. Edward also cared little for his own mother Emma, who had exiled him and his brother to French Normandy when she was Queen of England. He may also have suspected her of complicity in Alfred's death. In 1052, therefore, he confiscated her property and had her locked up in a distant "moustier"¹⁸⁷; which was an odd decision for the mystic he wished to be.

¹⁸³ This nickname was not given to him until much later, no doubt not without irony.

¹⁸⁴ His half-brother because they had the same mother.

¹⁸⁵ Probably judging it more manipulable because of its mystical and deep side.

¹⁸⁶ It is possible that Edward, knowing that his brother had been murdered by Godwin, abstained in order to punish Godwin by denying him the dynasty he was trying to create. Especially since the arrogance of the all-powerful Godwin must have horrified him.

¹⁸⁷ Moustier or moutier = convent, abbey or monastery in old French. The French built Ovest-Moustier Abbey in the middle of London, whose French name in English mouths came to be pronounced Westminster. A curious reminder of the French invasion of 1066.

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The main *stumbling block* between Edward the Confessor and his Saxon Nobility was the fact that, during the reign of Edward II¹⁸⁸, the French from Normandy became increasingly important in England under his influence. The Anglo-Saxon lords, of course, hated these French. These Saxon lords were themselves very powerful in England : *Godwin* controlled all of the south of England, *Siward* all of the north. And *Leofric* the whole center or Mercia. Edward, on the other hand, had been brought up in French Normandy; he spoke French better than *the old English*¹⁸⁹, and preferred the refined manners of the Continent to those much rougher and more boorish of the Saxons of England. French Normandy was truly the land of his childhood. All these French customs, clothes, fashions, style, language were of course displeasing to the English islanders. However, many English courtiers, ready to collaborate out of opportunism, began to imitate the French, pushing the Anglo-Saxon nationalists to distance themselves even further from them. Edward placed his French favourites in positions of trust. He imported French officials on whom alone he could rely, for they owed him everything in this foreign and hostile country. Among others, he appointed Robert de Jumiègue to the distinguished dignity of 32nd Archbishop of Canterbury. This drop, most bitter for the English, was to break the camel's back of their patience. This was just what Earl Godwin was waiting for to enter in open revolt at once. Edward thus risked finding himself alone in the face of the great Anglo-Saxon Nobility. Fortunately, the great princes of the north, Leofric and Siward, who would not see one of their equals¹⁹⁰, Godwin, become king in the place of Edward the Confessor, joined the king's cause out of jealousy. The most powerful noble family in a country can always count on the combined jealousy of the other families in the kingdom to stand in its way. This is the price of success. The other two rushed to the king's assistance, and Godwin and his sons were forced into

¹⁸⁸ Francized in Normandy during his childhood. The Normans who immigrated to French territory had been "French" for 5 generations at the time of the Battle of Hastings. Not to mention that marriages, legitimate or not, with "local French" had added to this assimilation, because the Vikings had only "haired" the local population who had not been driven out when this province was ceded to the invaders.

¹⁸⁹ Old English was actually *Saxon*.

¹⁹⁰ Equal, certainly, although much more influential.

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exile. Queen Edith¹⁹¹ was relegated to a distant and sad¹⁹² monastery. Victorious over the crisis, Edward the Confessor took advantage of the situation to invite William the Bastard, the young Duke of Normandy, to visit him in England.

This William of Normandy was the illegitimate son of Robert the Devil, former Duke of Normandy. Robert had no legitimate children. Guillaume was born to a local French woman¹⁹³, the pretty daughter of a tanner. In 1034, Robert the Devil decided to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land¹⁹⁴. However, this region was as dangerous as it is today. We were never sure if we would come back alive. Before leaving, in order to preserve his dynasty, Robert demanded of his nobles, of all lords, regardless of their hierarchical importance, that they swear allegiance to William, his illegitimate 8-year-old son, as the new Duke of Normandy. This done, he set off... and disappeared totally in Asia Minor, the same year. There was then a certain anarchy in this province of Normandy, the duke being a child, a bastard who came up against the devouring ambitions of his aristocrats vassals. Ambitions to overthrow the child, who had been recognized by the King of France (Henry I, his overlord suzerain), were unleashed. William's friends were murdered one after the other, and the boy owed his life only to the King of France by taking refuge with him. The latter intervened militarily on several occasions [but most notably in 1047 at the *Battle of Val-ès-Dunes*] to restore order. Scared and hardened by these revolts, William will entrust (later) all the strategic counties of England as well as the ecclesiastical dioceses to his most faithful friends, in order to control the minds, as well as the bodies, of his subjects. He demanded the oath of all his vassals *to his own person* and not to their

¹⁹¹ Daughter of Godwin, imposed as wife to the Confessor; remember!

¹⁹² Sad for the one who did not want monastic life. But it is certain that some monasteries were not so sad as all that.

¹⁹³ Non-Norman; for in Normandy, the 4 or 5000 Vikings had settled five generations earlier and had mixed —more or less, as the case may be— with the local "French" population estimated at nearly 100,000 souls. The Vikings, who came without women, took "French" wives from the first generation and assimilated immediately. William of Jumièges in his *Gesta Normannorum ducum* indicates that the Danish language was lost from the first two generations, and already in 950, Richard I, future Duke of Normandy, grandson of Rollo, had to go to Bayeux to learn some rudiments of Danish. He had been brought up in Caen where Danish was already no longer spoken to each other.

¹⁹⁴ Which proves that he was not such a *bad devil*, did not his courtiers call him *Robert the Magnificent*? It was certainly less dangerous than calling him the devil.

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hierarchical superior, as was then practiced in France... and order returned to his iron fist.

The problem of his illegitimacy seemed to worry the young duke of Normandy. He no doubt felt that he was discredited and even despised by his great French vassal lords, and he accumulated some grudges which he made pay dearly when he grew up. As soon as he had attained majority, he consolidated his throne by firmly attaching to himself the Clergy, to whom he lavished many rich gifts. The Clergy, who held Heaven and Hell in their ethereal hand, served him to legitimize his authority and to excommunicate the opponents and recalcitrant. The well-born nobles had better behave. Which they did, cautiously. The duke signed with a provoking *William the Bastard*, but woe betide anyone who ventured to lend him this doubtful title. This taste for cultivating provocation came to him from his father who had glorified it in the nickname of *Robert the Devil*. On one occasion, William besieged a castle whose lord had risked some amusing joke about his low birth, seized it and massacred everyone : men, women and children. *So, who's next !* Thus, inhabitants of Normandy and other French provinces tended to forget completely this detail of legitimacy which fell into voluntary oblivion. He centralized, imposed an iron discipline on his vassals, forced them to swear allegiance directly to him in spite of the rules of feudalism¹⁹⁵.

In 1051, therefore, Edward the Confessor invited William the Bastard to visit him in England. William possessed all that the King of England could hope for in an heir. In fact, he had no choice, it was William or anarchy, with its procession of civil wars between the Anglo-Saxon princes, and probably the coming to power of Godwin whom he hated and who had no relation to him or any "royal blood". On the other hand, Edward the Confessor and William the Bastard were cousins, for the latter was the great-grandson of Richard I of Normandy¹⁹⁶. Did he

¹⁹⁵ If the King of France had followed the same rule, he would have suffered fewer setbacks with his recalcitrant nobility throughout the history of France. It was a question of requiring that all oaths of allegiance, regardless of the level in the social hierarchy, be taken directly to the supreme chief. According to the rules of feudalism, the lower nobility swore allegiance to the high nobility, who alone would swear loyalty to the king. Thus, if an earl revolted against the king, he dragged his whole county behind him, obliged to respond with obedience. Great tyrants [such as Adolf Hitler...] demand the direct oath of the most modest of his men.

¹⁹⁶ Grand-père d'Édouard le Confesseur.

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promise to take him as his successor? No one knows, but we can assume it.

The invitation caused panic among the three great Saxon princes, including the exiled Earl Godwin, who was soon informed. Wild propaganda began to spread unhealthy rumors among the English population. Soon the popularity of King Edward the Confessor fell to its lowest point. To have on the throne of England¹⁹⁷ a man who was not of the royal family of Wessex, and who was not even a descendant of Alfred the Great, Saxon King of Wessex¹⁹⁸ : how could such a calamity be accepted? Godwin took advantage of this to fly to the aid of *the country in danger*; he returned from exile in 1052, re-established all his power, that of his sons, and took his daughter out of the monastery where she was languishing and moping about then too long. More powerful and prestigious than ever, Godwin had the French Archbishop of Canterbury deposed and one of his friends, the Saxon Stigand, appointed. But for this to happen, he needed the Pope's agreement. Never mind. Godwin ignored this and neglected to ask for papal authorization, because the Papacy, weak for two centuries, accepted local initiatives without penalizing them.¹⁹⁹ Unfortunately for him, in 1051, a cardinal named Hildebrand ruled Rome. A man of iron who wanted to restore Roman prestige in all its spiritual and temporal powers. On Hildebrand's advice, Pope Leo IX refused to recognize the Anglo-Saxon in order to punish Godwin for neglecting the papal *nihil obstat* , or perhaps at the secret request²⁰⁰ of Edward the Confessor. The successors of Leo IX also refused. Godwin, on the other hand, could not long enjoy his glory; he died on 15 April 1053 and was succeeded by his eldest son Harold²⁰¹ as Earl of Wessex and Kent and uncrowned ruler of England. He was the one who was destined to die under the axes of the French at the Battle of Hastings. In the north of England, Siward, Earl of

¹⁹⁷ It is William the Bastard, of course.

¹⁹⁸ Alfred the Great, 849-899.

¹⁹⁹ The Pope at the time was Leo IX, nicknamed the "Alsatian Pope", born Bruno von Eguisheim-Dagsburg on June 21, 1002. He was pope from February 12, 1049 until his death in Rome on April 19, 1054. Aristocratic family.

²⁰⁰ Secretive, because he was unwilling to upset the Godwinson family who controlled him.

²⁰¹ Godwinson or Son of Godwin.

Northumbria, also died with his son during the Scottish expedition against Macbeth, and Harold took the opportunity to have his own brother crowned in his place²⁰². As for Leofric's heirs, they themselves were brutally removed from power, and Mercia was divided and distributed to Godwin's other sons. Thus, the Godwinsons, more powerful than ever, had succeeded in monopolizing the whole of England. Edward the Confessor, in his sixties, without heirs, would undoubtedly have preferred the French duke William of Normandy, but he was careful not to say so openly, out of prudence, for, in spite of his French entourage, the Godwinsons would soon have made a bad impression on him. But what happened to the royal family of this former kingdom of Wessex, which became an earldom under the Godwins? The only survivors were the descendants of Edmond Cotte-de-Fer [Ironsides] who lived in exile²⁰³ in distant Hungary. At the death of Ironsides, there remained²⁰⁴ two sons: Edgar and Edward, nephews of Edward the Confessor.

Edgar was dead; there remained Edward, who had married the daughter of the German Emperor Henry II and had several children by her, including a son²⁰⁵ and a daughter named Margaret. The case of Edward was interesting; he was a direct descendant of Alfred the Great and Edmund Ironsides and could prove to be a nuisance in the imbroglio of the English succession. So, in 1064, King Edward the Confessor invited this nephew, the young exile Edward, surnamed *The Atheling*, to England²⁰⁶. Edward the Atheling arrived in the English *vipers' nest* with his wife and children full of hope. England was delirious. Edward the Confessor, however, did not grant him the slightest audience. The situation was going to become embarrassing, perhaps even critical... when Edward the Atheling died suddenly. Rumors of assassination were circulated, without confirmation, of course. Edgar, his 13-year-old son, in turn bore the title of the Atheling.

²⁰² Tostig; who was later to become the traitor of Anglo-Saxon England, as Prince Witiza had been to Christian Spain.

²⁰³ Exiled by the Godwinsons, as we have said above.

²⁰⁴ 50 years earlier.

²⁰⁵ Edgar. Such a marriage, for an unfortunate exile, was a real opportunity and deserves to be mentioned.

²⁰⁶ Aristocratic title that meant *prince héritier, dauphin*.

But the political situation in England was too critical and confused to allow a child on the throne. It took a hardened man, with little concern for human rights and respect for the person, to face all these problems and put down ambitions. There were still two possibilities to occupy the throne of England : Harold Godwinson, Earl of Wessex, and William the Bastard. A rumour then circulated, which has only come down to us from French sources and which was perhaps only a French invention intended to favour William the Bastard and facilitate his rise to power in London²⁰⁷. This rumour said that in 1064, Harold Godwinson of Wessex was caught in the English Channel in a gale and that his ship ran aground on the French coast of the province of Normandy. Like a spider on the prowl, William the Bastard immediately seized the captive and led him to his capital, Rouen, where he forced him to pledge by oath to give up his place to William in the future succession to the English throne. Harold had to take the oath, with his hand on the Bible, before the Council of Lords. The Bible was then removed and the plate that covered the table, and underneath Harold could see that a box had been secretly placed there, full of the bones of saints, various relics and scapulars. This very macabre ossuary was supposed to reinforce the virtue of legitimacy and the moral force of the oath. After which, Harold was allowed to return to England. As this story is reported only by the French side, it can be believed that it was fabricated. In any case, a forced oath has never been considered valid, except by politicians and mafiosi.

In Northumbria, or Northern England, the situation was getting tougher for Tostig Godwinson, Harold's brother, whom the latter had placed there out of nepotism. Tired of his cruelty and rapacity, the population, secretly encouraged by the local lords, rose up in 1065 and drove him out. The lords then chose a new Earl of Northumbria, Morcar, son of the old Leofric of Mercia. Sensing the moment when it would be necessary to concentrate all the Anglo-Saxon forces to resist the desires of the ambitious and powerful William the Bastard, duke of French Normandy²⁰⁸, Harold agreed to dismiss his brother and let Morcar take his place. A fatal mistake because *Tostig the Executioner* did not have the soul of a victim. The inevitable happened. Edward the Confessor died on

²⁰⁷ As we can see, it was not the Soviet Union that invented *disinformation*.

²⁰⁸ For the health of Edward the Confessor suggested an imminent end.

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January 5, 1066. The French from Normandy later swore that on his deathbed Edward the Confessor had chosen William the Bastard as his successor, and the Anglo-Saxons swore that on his deathbed, the Confessor had fixed his choice on Harold Godwinson of Wessex. Who was lying? Both, no doubt. "Looking back at the situation with impartiality, it seems far more likely that Edward's choice fell on William the Bastard rather than on Harold²⁰⁹. But in fact, it really didn't matter. The decision was not going to come from Edward's lips but from violence and force of arms. Power creates Right. And to begin with, Harold was on the spot²¹⁰. Harold Godwinson was immediately proclaimed King of England under the name of Harold II. But all in all, everything was going to be fine for William the Bastard, for several reasons. First of all, the one who had the most interest in putting a spanner in the works, so that this vassal would not become more powerful than his suzerain-overlord, was himself totally powerless because of his great youth: King Henry I of France had just died in 1060 and had left the throne to a child, Philippe I²¹¹.

In any case, the regent of France was none other than Baudouin [Baldwin] of Flanders... even the father-in-law of Duke William of Normandy, with whom he got on very well, supported him with all his power. Moreover, resentful as his mule, the Pope, still under Hildebrand's thumb, was still offended by Stigand's appointment to the archbishopric of Canterbury. He had once again asked Harold to fire him, but the latter, even more stubborn, had refused outright. Overflowing with holy anger, Pope Alexander II had given his blessing to William's plan of invasion, the interests of which corresponded perfectly with those of the Supreme Leader of Christendom. In addition, the gods of luck had definitely decided to go the extra mile to help their protégé, this young French from Normandy. Harold Godwinson stood ready in the south-east of England, to respond to the invasion of the French which was actively being prepared. But a traitor would *unintentionally* help the French by creating a second front, a *strategic diversion*. Earl Tostig, Harold Godwinson's brother, whom the latter had not supported, out of opportunism, when he

²⁰⁹ William of Normandy was the cousin of Edward the Confessor while Harold was not related to him.

²¹⁰ Asimov, Isaac, *The Shaping of England*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston [USA] 1969. p.146.

²¹¹ He was only 14 years old in 1066, at the time these events took place.

had been driven from his county of Northumbria by the recriminations of the populace, was looking for outside support to regain his beloved lost (taxpayers of) Northumbria. He eventually went to the King of Norway, Harald Hardrada²¹², an adventurer who had spent his life waging war in Russia and throughout the Byzantine Empire. Harald Hardrada agreed to help him in return for compensation and landed in September 1066 with a Norwegian army that was quickly joined by the forces of the traitor Tostig Godwinson. Together, they sailed up the Humber and into Northumbria. The new King of England sent Morcar to the north to hunt down the intruders, but Morcar was defeated by Harald Hardrada and Tostig Godwinson. King Harold of England then felt obliged to leave the south, with a heavy heart, in order to fight and expel Harald Hardrada.

This was a most serious strategic error. Wisdom and good strategy would have dictated that Harold remain in the south to fight the French invasion in order to destroy them during the landing manoeuvre. In any case, the Norwegian army was already on the ground. The only danger would have been to be attacked simultaneously by the two enemy landed armies; an eventuality that had to be avoided at all costs. But this was possible by *the old tactics of the Horaces*²¹³. Anxious not to destroy or weaken his army, Harold Godwinson offered his brother Tostig to return Northumbria to him, hoping to separate the two allies or perhaps (probably) destroy them separately. But, unwilling to trust his brother who had already betrayed him once by not supporting him to keep him at the head of his county, Tostig decided not to disappoint too quickly his Norwegian ally whom he had brought in at great expense and whom he could still need. He asked his brother what land would be ceded to Norway in the event of an amicable arrangement : "Seven feet of English humus for every grave; or a little more, since Harald Hardrada is taller than average !" the King of England is said to have replied; an answer that caused the failure of the negotiations, as one can easily imagine.

²¹² Hardrada = Hard-Leader. We will sometimes write Hararld instead of Harold for the Viking King.

²¹³ In ancient Roman legend, during the war between Rome and the city of Alba Longa, two groups of three brothers were chosen to fight to the death for each side. The three Horace fought for the Romans, the three Curiaces for the Albans. At the first clash, two Horaces fell dead and the three Curiaces were wounded. The third Horace, unhurt, feigned flight, pursued by the three wounded, and was able to attack and kill the three wounded separately, depending on their speed.

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Ironically, this was exactly the amount of land that the King of Norway and Tostig himself received. They were both killed, along with thousands of English and Norwegians soldiers, fighting to achieve their King's ambitions in the ensuing battles²¹⁴. The *Battle of Stamfordbridge* was fought on September 25th, 1066, 12 km east of York. But the problems of the King of England were not solved. In the south, an unforeseen chance²¹⁵ had delayed William the Bastard and his French army until September 28, 1066, unknowingly, three days after the Battle of Stamfordbridge. The French had thus been able to land at a time when the beaches of south-east England were totally devoid of any opposition. Harold Godwinson heard the news of the landing on 2 October. And instead of resting his soldiers, regrouping his forces, and reinforcing his army, he set off on a mad, exhausting race south, so blinded was he with anger. William, for his part, cautious for once, fortified himself on the coast, leaving his troops and horses to recover at leisure from this trying crossing and landing.

Leaders *William the Bastard, duke of Normandy, commanded the French army. *The King of England, Harold Godwinson, led the English army²¹⁶.

Troops *French troops were made up of contingents from several provinces of France: Brittany, Maine, Aquitaine, Île-de-France²¹⁷, Anjou, Burgundy and, of course, Normandy. In total 50,000 men according to old sources, and 7,000 according to estimates by contemporary specialists, including 5,000 archers and 2,000 cavalrymen. The army included French from Normandy²¹⁸ and other provinces of France, even from

²¹⁴ In the end, these kings are not to be pitied, because the thousands of English and Norwegians soldiers who died for the ambition of those two lords received no burial. Harold Godwinson, however, showed generosity; he allowed the son of the King of Norway to return to his country where he became the new king Olaf III.

²¹⁵ It was a great chance for Guillaume; bad weather, as it also delayed the Allied landings in early June 1944.

²¹⁶ His royal banner, representing a dragon, was nicknamed: "*The Ravager of the World*". This is to say that the major concern of this monarch was not the love of his neighbor.

²¹⁷ The expression *Île-de-France* is of course anachronistic in 1066, since it was only created in 1976. We should say *France*.

²¹⁸ If we are to believe the poem created by Guy, Bishop of Amiens [Carmen de Hastingae proelio, translation by Catherine Morton and Hope Muntz, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1972.] on the occasion

Sicily... *The English numbered, under their dragoon²¹⁹, much larger numbers according to all, English and French historians. But the number remains vague. A monk, sent from King Harold Godwinson to William, pretended that the English army numbered 1,200,000 men (presumably to discourage him from attacking). Modern scholars believe that the number of 10,000, including 2,000 houscarles²²⁰ and 8,000 fyrds, is closer to reality.

Strategy or tactics : **Strategically**, the French-English chronicler Ordéric Vital mentions that Tostig, King Harold's brother, had a mortal hatred for his brother who had not restored him to his earldom [county] of Northumbria. Under the pretext of going to his parents-in-law in Flanders, Tostig went to Normandy to incite the Bastard to avenge him. On this occasion, William called his barons together to decide on the course of action to be taken. This done, Tostig visited the King of Norway to urge him to launch an expedition against England. We can therefore assume a strategic understanding between William and King Harold Hardrada of Norway. *But the long wait of the French²²¹, supposedly in the hope of favourable winds²²², seemed to be only a subterfuge to let Norway attack first and strike the first, the most costly blow.*

of the coronation of Queen Matilda in 1068. The bishop, or his negro, speaks of the episode of the juggler Taillefer who provoked the English before the battle of Hastings, and of the presence of French, some Sicilian, and Calabrian, who had returned from these two regions to obtain a colonial share of England. (Roger I of Hauteville [1040-1101], a French Norman, had conquered Sicily from the Saracens and taken the title of Grand Count of Sicily. His son, Roger II of Hauteville [1093-1154], added southern Italy [Naples] to his dominions and was crowned king of the Two-Sicilies in 1131... Tancred, king of Sicily and Naples [1189-1194], natural son of Roger of Apulia. One of them, Tancred, received the principality of Galilee or Tiberias. The kingdom of the Two-Sicilies passed in the fourteenth century to the dukes of Anjou.

²¹⁹ The cross of St. George did not become the national symbol of the English until 1277; the first flag with the cross of Saint-George was hoisted that year. At Hastings, the English wielded a winged dragon, nicknamed "The Ravager of the World" which served as a rallying point. According to legend, St. George killed a dragon that threatened to suffocate the king's daughter. Paradoxically, at the Battle of Hastings, it was the cross of St. George of the French that crushed the English dragoon. St. George is today the patron saint of soldiers, gunsmiths, and peasants,... and the English.

²²⁰ The king's personal guard, armed with very long battleaxes.

²²¹ Wait from August 1 to September 28; Two months without wind seems quite unlikely. In 1944, the Allies also waited for good weather, but the wait was shorter.

²²² As Guillaume de Poitiers and Guy d'Amiens affirm.

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On 8 September, King Harold, seeing his resources dwindling, dismissed his fleet, demobilized part of his army, and returned to London. The entry into the campaign of the French, on the 28th of September, took place, as if by chance, *three days after the battle of Stamford Bridge, just enough time to come to France to warn William of Normandy*. "The absence of wind was also the 'noble' justification for a Machiavellian calculation by Guillaume the Bastard : (1) first to make Harold [of England] believe that the French expedition was postponed until the spring of 1067 and (2) to encourage King Harold Godwinson to disband his army, then (3) to suggest to the Norwegians that the fleet of William the Bastard was immobilized, (4) to let them land in the north and face the English forces alone. William suspected that the winter, earlier in Norway than in France, would encourage Harald [Hardrada of Norway] to launch his military operation first²²³." **Tactically**, during this first Anglo-French battle, the two antagonists held a position that characterizes *most of the battles in the common history of the two countries: the English entrenched in an elevated defensive position, and the French, at the bottom of the slope, playing the offensive role*.

The English, although more numerous, occupied a plateau at an altitude of 90m oriented East-South-East; *the Plateau of Senlac*. The side of this terrace facing the French was quite steep. The north face left a passage bordered, to the east, by a ravine, *the Malefosse*, and by a less steep ravine to the west. The French, massed at the foot of the plateau, had to advance on uneven and very difficult ground. The English, at the summit, had strongly entrenched themselves behind a long ditch reinforced by numerous obstacles²²⁴, and finally by a sort of palisade made of large shields interlocking with each other. Thus protected, the English fought on foot, with their long pikes, their lances and their axes. They formed an impressive human line²²⁵ whose ends went up to the north to cover the flanks. Harold had placed his standard at the highest point. The French formed three divisions at the foot of the plateau. The contingents from Brittany constituted the Left Wing and were to attack from the

²²³ Pierre Bouet, O.U.E.N. de Caen, Hastings, triomphe de la ruse normande, Historia spécial no. 59, pp. 54-55.

²²⁴ Stakes, traps, shields...

²²⁵ 5 rows deep.

southwest. The contingent from the French province of Normandy were fighting in the Center. They were commanded by William the Bastard himself and attacked from the south. Close to Guillaume, a soldier named Toustain Leblanc waved the ducal banner from Rome. Contingents from the other provinces of France (Paris, Poitou...) formed the Right Wing and were to attack from the southeast. In depth, each division consisted of a line of archers, a line of armored but poorly armed infantry, and finally the Cavalry. The archers and infantry were to harass the English lines, and the cavalry to break through them. Guillaume used the combination of *preparatory 'shooting'* and assault with genius. The French archers' shooting broke the cohesion of the English line, which was then easier to break through, even if the English were not only more numerous but strongly entrenched in a higher position. The preparatory shooting of the French archers was carried out in *curved fire*²²⁶ because the fence of shields did not allow for *straight shots*.

Three French retreats, two of which were *simulated*, drew the English out of their entrenched positions and allowed their numbers to be decimated and weakened. Noteworthy is the use of cunning²²⁷ by William, who feigned several retreats in order to lure the English out of their protective entrenchments. But it is not given to any warlord to feign panic without incurring the danger of a real panic. Sun Tzu wrote the 18th Principle of his Chapter V [Energy] as follows: "*Apparent confusion results from order, apparent cowardice from courage, apparent weakness from strength.*" Tu Mu, one of the commentators of the great Chinese theorist Sun Tzu, pointed out: "... *if one wishes to feign disorder in order to attract the enemy, one must be well disciplined oneself. Only then can one feign confusion. Whoever wishes to feign cowardice and to be on the lookout for the enemy must be courageous, for only then will he be able to feign fear. He who wishes to appear weak in order to make his enemy arrogant must be extremely strong. Only then can he feign weakness*²²⁸."

²²⁶ But the trajectory of the arrows had to be too large, because of the low specific weight of these projectiles which, in free fall, did not reach a sufficient striking force to put a man out of action. The bow of English archers was the Welsh long bow.

²²⁷ "*The whole art of war is based on deception*" 17th Principle of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*.

²²⁸ Born in Wan Nien, China [803-852 AD] Tu Mu rose to the office of secretary of the Great Council. He was a great poet. His biography is taken from the *Nouvelle Histoire de la dynastie des Tangué*. He remains known today in military circles for his commentaries on Sun Tzu's *Art of War*.

Summary of the action: The fight opened at 09:00 with the shooting of the French archers and the English riposte [spears, arrows and rock-throwing]. Then the French cavalry rushed to the assault; but the perche-rons climbed the steep slope with difficulty. Finally, the French Left Wing [the Bretons] hesitated and retreated. The false rumour of William's death soon transformed this ebb and flow into confusion in the Centre and on the Right. Seeing this retreat, the English rushed out of their entrenchments and pursued the French. William the Bastard, who had not taken part in the first assault, uttered a few cries to show that he was alive, rallied the fugitives and turned them against the English who were descending the slope. A violent fight ensued at the foot of the plateau, at the end of which the English retreated in disorder and tried to move back to their fortified positions, closely pursued by the French, whose counterattack broke on the English entrenchments.

Shortly afterwards, William had a second retreat (simulated this time). The English rushed a second time in pursuit of the French, who, at the signal, turned around, shouting loudly. A second deadly melee battle caused another retreat of the English, whose survivors managed to regain the entrenchments at the summit. Later, another feigned retreat dragged some of the English troops down the slope where they suffered a new counterattack from the so-called fugitives who turned to face them. This is probably the only historical example where the same stratagem succeeds twice in a row in the same battle. The English pursuers having been cut to pieces after a hard fight, it remained to take the English entrenchments at the summit, which were still very strongly held. It was *the right wing*²²⁹ that launched and succeeded in this final and decisive assault. This was the last bloody melee, which ended with the capture of the English entrenchments. King Harold was killed there. The English army then broke off the fight and launched a desperate flight towards the passage bordered by the ravine. The French knights pursued them fiercely. But in the darkness of the night, which had fallen after seven or eight hours of fierce fighting, many English knights crashed into each other at the bottom of this steep and dangerous ravine which the French at once

²²⁹ A non homogeneous French troops coming from several provinces of France.

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nicknamed the *Malefosse*²³⁰. Late at night, the French returned to the plateau and pitched their tents. The French dead were buried the next day. English peasants from the surrounding area came to claim their fallen lords and men, but the unclaimed English dead were left here and there on the hill. Harold's body being unrecognizable, only his mistress²³¹ was able to identify it by certain intimate marks. Thus died the last all-English king, "*the last native King of England*"²³² .

Losses: The exact losses are unknown. They were extremely heavy, particularly on the English side, because of the pursuit, the final massacre and the disorganization that followed the battle²³³. King Harold was killed while desperately defending his banner, as were his two brothers Gurth and Leowin.

Consequence of this English defeat: This decisive battle destroyed the only army capable of opposing the occupation of England by the French. In addition, the death of the King of England settled the problem of succession in favour of William the Bastard, who thus will become (after pacification of the country) William the Conqueror, King of England. The English people came under the domination of a new French ruling class that imposed the French language as the official language of the country for three centuries and behaved in a brutal, haughty and unjust manner towards the Anglo-Saxon natives. For English institutions, it was the end of the Saxon era. Between France and England, nearly a thousand years of war were to follow. England began a rapid change : "The feudal pyramid that was thus set up was very stretched : at first the new *king* had rewarded his supporters, after which these tenants-in-chief, the

²³⁰ The bad pit.

²³¹ Édith *Cou-de-Cygne* or *Swan's Neck*; a royal neck.

²³² An English historian wrote sadly.

²³³ Three centuries later, the Franco-Scottish tactician Bérault Stuart suggested this tactical rule which, among medieval knights, was not so obvious: "Item, if he is forced to fire and fight his enemies for lack of viures or for fear that his enemies will be reinforced by people or other chouses, and that they will not be able to pass elsewhere. Therefore, let the ennemys be in their camp or in their order, let them find all the means they can to get them from the fort and their order. And to call a squad of people to rob them and skirmish them. See if they will drive them out in disorder or beat them with their artillery, or as they will see business. For war is waged in the eye; and according to what one wants, one must govern, and what one wants to do." [Treatise on the Art of War, Bérault Stuart, Martinus Mijhoff, The Hague, 1976. p.7; lines 155-164]

barons, had in turn distributed land from their own fiefs to those whose loyalty they wished to attach to themselves. The very essence of the feudal system²³⁴." The Registre Book (or *Domesday Book* or *Doomsday Book*) estimated the English population at about two million people and the French colonizing class at 10,000 people [nobility, high clergy and administrative staff, especially the sheriffs; overall 1 Frenchman for every 200 inhabitants], which was ten times more than the proportion of the two ruling classes in France. In fact, the *total* French emigration to *New France*, from the founding to 1763, was also 10,000 people. This gives an order of comparison. French became the official language of England and remained so for several centuries. It can even be said that it remained the technical language of law in this country until the French Revolution, that is to say until the end of the eighteenth century. "These conquerors of England have always been considered French. From the beginning, they were called *Franci* in Latin, meaning "*French*"²³⁵, or *Francigenae*, meaning "*originally from France*"²³⁶ ". The Bayeux Tapestry, which is an essential source of information on the Conquest and colonization of England by the French, refers to the French" under the Latin name of *Franci* (French). At the entrance to the cemetery of a small town in France²³⁷, the English placed, at the end of the Second World War, a Latin inscription: *Nos a Guillelmo victi, victoris patriam liberavimus*²³⁸.

²³⁴ Philippe Chassaing, *Histoire de l'Angleterre*, Éditions Aubier, Paris 1966.

²³⁵ Some say Franks, which amounts to the same thing; it was the time of the *Lingua Franca*, the language of the French that radiated throughout the known world.

²³⁶ François Neveux, *La Normandie, des ducs aux rois*, Éditions Ouest-France, Rennes, 1998.

²³⁷ Bayeux.

²³⁸ And yet, as Antony Beevor explains, it looked more like revenge than anything else. ["We, defeated by William, have liberated the victor's homeland"]. "The first two British bombing raids on Caen resulted in many French civilian casualties." According to Antony Beevor in his book *D-Day: The British bombing of Caen beginning on D-Day in particular was stupid, counter-productive and above all very close to a war crime*." "There were more than 2,000 casualties there on the first two days and in a way it was miraculous that more people weren't killed when you think of the bombing and the shelling which carried on for days afterwards. French civilians, caught in the middle of these battlefields or under Allied bombing, endured terrible suffering. Even the joys of liberation had their darker side. The war in northern France marked not just a generation, but the whole of the postwar world, profoundly influencing relations between America and Europe." The bombings destroyed 96% of Tilly-la-Campagne (Calvados), 95% of Vire (Calvados), 88% of Villers-Bocage (Calvados), 82% of Le Havre (Seine-Maritime), 77% of Saint-Lô (Manche), 76% of Falaise (Calvados), 75% of Lisieux (Calvados), 75% of Caen (Calvados)." Antony Beevor, *D-Day: The Battle For Normandy*, Penguin Books Ltd., p. 263 – In all, 70 000 "civilian French" were killed in Normandy by these

Revolt of Hereford.

Date of the action : July 1067.

Location : Hereford is located 25 km west of the Offa Wall separating England from Wales, therefore in Welsh territory; 52°05', 02°71'.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Campaign of 1067.

Context : William the Bastard [or The Conqueror], the new king of England, was in France, in its ducal territories. This second revolt was more serious than that of Dover, for the Welsh came into action, they who, until then, had not had the same attitude as the English. This people lived freely behind the *Offa Dyke*²³⁹, a double wall delimiting a neutral zone. The French remained officially distant from it but gradually and secretly increased their influence through alliances. Thus, they supported the châtelains of Hereford, who were led by Richard, son of Scrubs, a Northman from Edgard's time, who had, of course, taken up the cause of the French. As the lords around Hereford tried to rally supporters to their cause under Richard, Eldrick, a relative of Godwin, attacked them and stirred up the Welsh who inflicted a defeat on the local French, forcing them to leave their estates.

Leaders in attendance *Eldrick commanded the Welsh.

Troops engaged : Unknown.

absurd bombings. Thus were avenged the colonialist crimes of the French of William the Bastard in England !

²³⁹ Offa Wall or Clawdd Offa. The Wall of Offa (285km) was not erected by the Romans like Hadrian's Wall [located between Scotland and England], but by the Anglo-Saxon King Offa, who ruled the kingdom of Mercia from 757 to 796, and who was keen to isolate the recalcitrant Welsh.

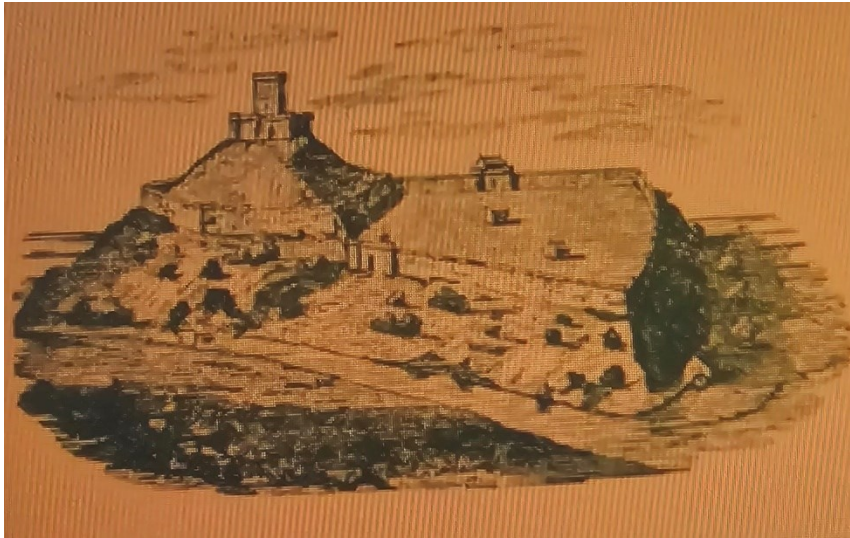
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Action Summary : Nothing is known about this battle. It was, without a doubt, a melee combat between men-at-arms.

Casualties : Unknown.

As a result of this French defeat , this English success immediately provoked anti-French unrest around September 1067, defection of English notables and uprisings in the cities.

Castle Green schema in Hereford with its motte and belay.



Battle of the Humber River.

Date of the Action : 1068

Location : 45^{km} north of Lincoln, on the York Road. 53°69', 00°69'.²⁴⁰

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1068.

Context : In Mercia and Northumbria, the English insurgents against the French occupation took refuge in the forests and swamps. Edgar the Ætheling became the leader of the English resistance. William the first stormed *Oxford*, then *Warwick*, *Leicester*, *Derby*, *Nottingham*, and *Lincoln*.

Leaders in attendance *William the Bastard, known as "The Conqueror", commanded the French.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown (probably 6 or 7,000 men).

Strategy or tactics: A pitched battle in the open country with melee and hand-to-hand combat, without any spirit of overall manoeuvre. According to Jomini's classification, this battle was of the first order, *i.e.* the simple parallel order. This tactician says that this order is the worst of all, because it requires no particular tactics, the battalions colliding head-on without any idea of manoeuvre²⁴¹.

²⁴⁰ The site of the battle is "at the point where the rivers Trent and Ouse meet, the junction of which forms the Humber River."

²⁴¹ Baron de Jomini, *Précis de l'Art de la Guerre*, chapter IV, article XXXI, pp. 188-189. Antoine-Henri, Baron de Jomini, was born on 6 March 1779 in Payerne (Switzerland) and died in Passy (France) on 24 March 1869. Military theoretician and general. He is often considered one of the founders of modern tactics. In 1798 he began his military career in the French army. After the Peace of Amiens, he wrote his *Traité de grande Tactique* [Traité des grandes opérations militaires [5 volumes and atlas] 1805, which earned him the rank of colonel in 1804. He served under Marshal Ney at Ulm (1805), Jena and Eylau (1806). In 1808, he took part in the Spanish campaign. In 1810, judging that he did not obtain from the French the honours due to him, he negotiated a post with the

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Summary of the action : After Lincoln, the French army of occupation headed for York. But halfway down, 45 km from Lincoln, the French encountered an Anglo-Welsh army. It was a pitched battle with a very deadly melee in which the Anglo-Welsh were defeated. But they defended their positions foot by foot. The English losses were very heavy.

Casualties : The Anglo-Welsh losses were very heavy because of the massacre of unmounted soldiers that followed.

The consequence of this English defeat was the partial destruction of the insurgent forces. The vanquished fled and were divided into two groups. The first embarked on the Humber River and sailed up to Scotland to join King Malcolm. The rest tried to take refuge in the city of York.

Huntingdon Castle



Russians, at that time allies of the French. Napoleon appointed him Brigadier General and he remained in the Grande Armée. Later, his promotion ceased, and, feeling unfairly treated, he transferred to the Russian army in August 1813 where he became lieutenant-general and aide-de-camp to Tsar Alexander I. After the Empire, he returned to live in Paris, and in 1826 he became General-in-Chief of the Russian Army. He fought the Turks and organized the Russian Military Academy. Although he later lived in Brussels, he was appointed military tutor to the Tsarevich for whom he wrote his *Précis de l'Art de la Guerre* [1838]. As a military critic, Jomini set boundaries between *strategy*, *tactics* and *logistics* for the first time.

Siege of Huntingdon.

Date of the Action : 1068

Location : City in England located 100 km north of London. 52°33'; 00°18'. According to the Great Domesday Book, Huntingdon was registered by the French civil servants of England as Huntedone / Huntedun / Huntedune.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1068.

Background : After the defeat of Humbert River, the Anglo-Welsh army was again defeated before York and then the French attacked Cambridge and Huntingdon in succession.

Leaders present: William the Bastard commanded the French forces.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown (doubtless 7 or 8,000 men).

Strategy or tactics : A breach was probably created by throwing rocks and digging mines, followed by a final assault by escalation through a breach.

Summary of the action : No details of the siege and assault have come down to us. But resistance must have been strong in this area since the confiscations of land belonging to the English and the redistribution to the French colonists were very important.

As a result of this English defeat, the Frenchman Eustache was appointed sheriff of the county. He later took the name *Eustace of Huntingdon*²⁴². He greatly oppressed the English people.

²⁴² Eustache de Louvetot ou Luvethot [from Louvetot in France 49.57133, 0.71248], baron et comte de Huntingdon. whose "evil deeds," when he was sheriff of Huntingdon, according to Freeman, "stand out clearly in the Survey (Domesday Book). The name *Earl of Huntingdon* passed in the sixteenth century to the Hastings family.

Siege of La Réole.

Date of the action : end of August - 22 September 1324

Location : On the banks of the River Garonne, between Marmande and Bordeaux, Guyenne. Aquitaine, France. Geographical coordinates: 44°58; 00°02'.

Conflict : Campaign of 1324. Feudal war between the kings of France and England.

Context : By the Treaty of Paris, confirmed by the Peace Treaty of 1303, revised in Périgueux in 1311, certain seigneuries were said to be *privileged*²⁴³. But there was nothing to specify that the dependencies of these seigneuries were also attached to France. Blurred border almost always leads to war. Especially when one of the two antagonists is looking for it. Thus, Saint-Sardos d'Aquitaine belonged to the priory of Sarlat; however, the King of France was co-lord of Sarlat. The same king decided to set a trap for the English. He sent some French soldiers to this village in order to undertake the construction of a "French" fortress. When the menacing walls began to emerge from the ground, the Seneschal of England in Aquitaine, Ralph Basset, invaded Saint-Sardos unexpectedly, plundered the village and hanged the officers of the King of France. It was an egoistic satisfaction for the latter, who had a good pretext for the confiscation of Aquitaine. Hoping that the English would lock themselves in their hostile antagonism by refusing any compromise, the king summoned the culprits before the Parliament of Toulouse. One of the participants in the raid, Raymond de Montpezat, was convicted *in absentia* : his property seized and his castle dismantled²⁴⁴. The French ambassadors, sent to Montpezat to make known the court decision, were beaten. To force the King of

²⁴³ Because although they were located in Aquitaine, they came under the direct allegiance of the King of France.

²⁴⁴ Mantle (mantel) or *curtain wall* joining the towers. The dismantling was the destruction of the mantle, i.e. the fortifications.

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England to pay homage to the King of France for Aquitaine, Charles confiscated Aquitaine and Ponthieu on 1 July 1324. Then, Charles of Valois arrived before La Réole with a besieging army.

Chiefs present: **French* : Charles de Valois, son of the King of France; Le Gaucher de Châtillon. □ **English*: Edmund de Kent, nephew of Charles de Valois.

Strategy or tactics : If Crécy (1346) was the first land battle in open field in which artillery participated, La Réole was the first siege to use this novelty. The fortress of La Réole was perched on top of a rock that was very difficult to besiege. All that remained was to starve it. During the first surprise *sortie* (during the night after their arrival), the French lost about sixty men.

Summary of the action : When they arrived in front of the fortress, the French pitched their tents all over the countryside, but during the night they were attacked unexpectedly by the Anglo-Gascons. It was their first *sortie*. However, the Constable of France managed to gather a certain number of lords and counterattack the *sortie* party who retreated towards the fortress of La Réole. The blockade was therefore established by separate works, "boulevards"²⁴⁵, intended to prevent, as far as possible, the logistical supply of the besieged city. On 1 September, Marshal Mathieu de Trye²⁴⁶, accompanied by a delegation, appeared before La Réole to summon Kent to hand over the keys of the city and the entire duchy to him for *lack of homage* [to the King of France]. This, of course, was rejected by the English. Sappers then began to dig mines but the besieged dug counter-mines. Bombards were put into action; with more noise than harm. The famine was being felt severely. On 22 September the town's burghers and merchants forced Kent to enter into negotiations with the

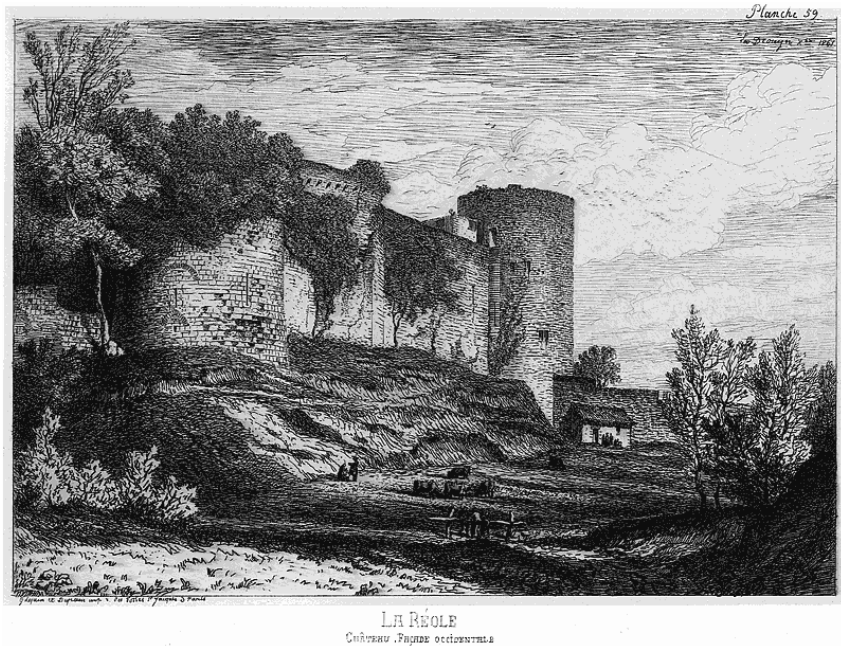
²⁴⁵ Boulevard : "wall of a fortification" made of wood or earthwork.

²⁴⁶ Marshal of France Mathieu III de Trie (or Trye) was lord of Araines, Vaumain and others. He was the son of Renaud de Trie, lord of Vaumain, who was killed at the Battle of Courtrai in 1302. The Trie family originates from Trie-en-Vexin in the Paris region, not Trie-sur-Baïse (Gers). The latter was built by Jean de Trie, seneschal of Toulouse, to colonize a poor region.

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French. A truce was established. The preliminaries of peace were signed on 31 May 1325 between Isabella, Queen of England, and France.

As a result of this English defeat , England lost the Agenais (Agen region) and the Bazadais (Bazas region), undertook to pay homage to the King of France for Aquitaine and paid 60,000 pounds as "reparations".



Fortress of La Réole, Reconstitution by Léo Drouyn. Priv.Coll.

Siege of Leicester.

Date of the Action : 1068.

Location : City located in England, 150 km N.N.W. of London, 52°63', 01°13'

Conflict: Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1068.

Context : After the west of England was crushed in 1067, the rebels in the provinces of Mercia and Northumbria still had to be put down. Edgar the Ætheling became the declared leader of the English resistance. He took refuge in Scotland. The campaign of 1068 was therefore directed northwards. Guillaume stormed first Oxford, then Warwick.

Leaders in attendance *William the Bastard commanded the French.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown. Probably 6 or 7,000 men.

Strategy or tactics : Assault by climbing, after creating a breach made by throwing rocks and also by digging mines under the walls to make it collapse.

Summary of the action : After that, the French threw themselves on Leicester, 50 km to the N.N.E. The city was stormed and almost completely razed to the ground. It was fortified and of the same importance as Warwick.

Casualties : Unknown but heavy.

As a result of this English defeat , the whole town was confiscated from its English owners and passed into French hands, as well as almost the

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whole county²⁴⁷, which shows that there was strong resistance. In fact, only two or three small English landowners, who showed themselves ready to collaborate with the French colonizers, remained in possession of their property.



Motte and bailey castle of Leicester built by the French to keep an eye on the English population. Priv.Coll.

²⁴⁷ Shire.

Siege of Lidford.

Date of the Action : 1067

Location : Lydford, Devon City, England. 50°64'; 4°10'

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Campaign of pacification, 1067.

Background : After subduing Barnstaple, the French moved towards Lidford.

Leaders in attendance □ William the Bastard commanded the French.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown. Probably 6 or 7,000 men.

Strategy or tactics : Creation of breaches by mining and throwing rocks, then assault the walls.



The Lidford Castle (ruins). Priv.Coll.

Action Summary : Details unknown. The Register shows that the city did not capitulate until 40 houses were destroyed. Lidford had a total of only 28 houses inside the market town and 41 outside.

Casualties : Unknown,

As a result of this English defeat , Devon and Cornwall were subdued, and the lands of these two provinces were confiscated from their nobility and assigned to French colonists. Some were left to their English owners who agreed to collaborate with the French.

Siege of Lincoln.

Other Name: The French called Lincoln: "Nicole".²⁴⁸

Date of the Action : 1068

Location : City in England located 210 km north of London, 53°21', 00°56'.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1068.

Background: After crushing the West in 1067, William stormed Oxford, then Warwick, Leicester, Derby and Nottingham.

Leaders in attendance *William the Bastard commanded the French.

Number of personnel engaged : *Unknown. Probably 6 or 7,000 men.

Strategy or tactics : Breaching the wall using rock-throwing and mines, followed by a direct assault by climbing.

Summary of the action : After Nottingham, the French marched on Lincoln, which they stormed. When the city capitulated, they erected a fortress, as this region, once Danish, could receive help from the Vikings. In addition, hostages were claimed. The future showed that this demand had been wise. One hundred and sixty-six houses disappeared to make way for the French fortress and other defenses.

Casualties : Unknown.

²⁴⁸ By French euphony. The word "collaborator" is to be taken in the anachronistic sense of the Second World War.

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As a consequence of this British defeat, the property of the Resistance fighters was confiscated and redistributed to the French and to the "English collaborators." A *motte and bailey castle* was built by the French. The Domesday Survey of 1086 directly records 48 castles in England, with two in Lincolnshire including one in Lincoln. Building a castle within an existing settlement sometimes meant existing structures had to be removed : of the castles noted in the Domesday Book, thirteen included references to property being destroyed to make way for the castle. In Lincoln's case, 166 "*unoccupied residences*" were pulled down to clear the area on which the castle would be built.

The French castle of Lincoln. Priv.Coll.



Battle of Lincoln.

Date of the action : 8 September, 1069.

Location : City in England located 210 km north of London. 53°21', 00°56'.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1069.

Background : After the failure of Dover and Sandwich, the Anglo-Danish fleet entered the Humber on 8 September 1069. They were joined by a large number of English insurgents from Northumberland, as well as many ships from Scotland loaded with English refugees in Scotland, in the country of King Malcolm²⁴⁹ III. Edgar the Ætheling also set out on the campaign. Waltheof, son of Siward, Earl of Northampton, and Huntingdon, also joined the insurrection. William learned of the threat to York and all of Northumberland.

Chiefs in attendance *Edgar the Ætheling²⁵⁰, of the House of Cerdic. Waltheof, Northampton and Huntingdon County.

Troops engaged : *Anglo-Danish fleet of 240 to 300 ships, and an army of nearly 10,000 men.

Strategy or tactics : Melee and hand-to-hand combat, without overall maneuvering.

²⁴⁹ Malcolm killed the notorious Macbeth in battle in 1057 and then ascended the throne of Scotland. After the conquest of England by the French in 1066, Malcolm gave refuge to the Anglo-Saxon prince Edgar the Aetheling and his sisters, one of whom, Margaret (later St. Margaret of Scotland), became Malcolm's second wife.

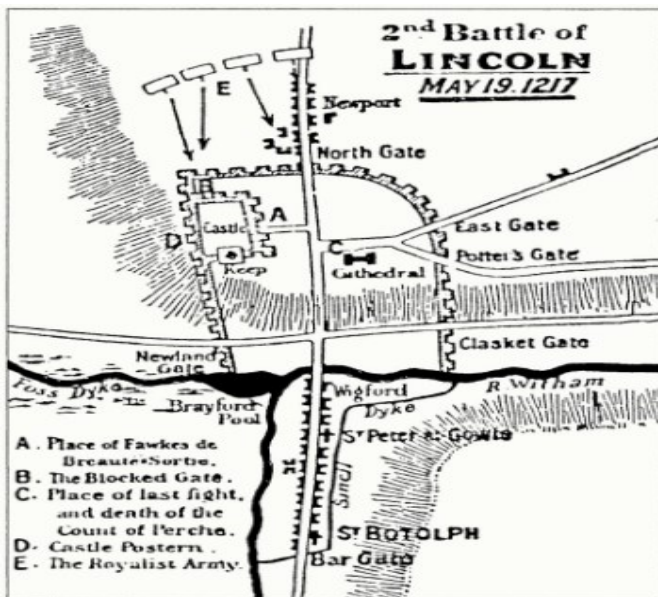
²⁵⁰ Cerdic House

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Summary of the action : Edgar the Ætheling, with the crew of a single ship, wanted to go and plunder the coast of Lindesey. But they were attacked by the French garrison of Lincoln. After a brief battle, only The Ætheling and two of his comrades (who hadn't overexposed themselves) managed to escape, covered by the others who were slaughtered. The ship itself was captured and destroyed by the French.

Casualties *Anglo-Danish: about two hundred men killed. *French: unknown.

The consequence of this Anglo-Danish defeat : This failure calmed the spirits of revolt by depriving the insurgents of any hope of obtaining a change by force.



Battle of Lincoln "or Lincoln Fair."

Date of the action : 20 May 1217.

Location : Lincolnshire capital, 60 m above sea level, England. 53°21', 00°56'.

Conflict : English Civil War or War of the English Succession, 1216-1217. French participation.

Context : The defeat of Bouvines and the crushing taxes it entailed in England provoked a revolt by the exasperated English barons against their King John Lackland. They asked the Dauphin of France to become King of England, on condition that he seize power himself by killing or expelling John Lackland. But King John died on 12 October 1216, and some of the English barons no longer wanted Louis of France but preferred Henry [III] son of John Lackland (or the Landless).

If the Dauphin of France, Louis, had initially rejoiced at the death of King John, he suddenly discovered that the son would be much harder to sweep away than the father. According to John Lingard²⁵¹, Henry's youth and innocence aroused universal compassion. John Lackland, it was said, had behaved like a tyrant. But what crime had this prince committed that he should abandon the crown which rightfully belonged to him? His rival was a Frenchman who, every day, betrayed in his behavior an unjust partiality in favor of his compatriots... To develop such an impression and to foment jealousy and discontent became the mission of Gualo and Guillaume Le Maréchal [from the de Clère family, Earl of Pembroke]. To all those who returned to their first allegiance [Henry, son of John Lackland], rights and freedoms were confirmed. Calumnies pointing out the arrogance of the French, and their contempt for the native English, were cleverly propagated by the French aristocracy who shared the colony of the island of Great Britain. The fable of "*conspiracy*

²⁵¹ John Lingard, *The History of England, from the First Invasion by the Romans to the Accession of William and Mary, in 1688*, in 10 volumes. Vol.2, p.380-387, J.C. Nimmo & Bain, 1883, London.

against the head of the English nobility" was revived and believed. And the minds of men were cleansed, confounded, and entangled by constant rumors of fulminated excommunication against Louis of France and his partisans²⁵²... John's tyranny had disappeared with the tyrant, and those who persisted in opposing the succession of his son, proved that their former reasons were only lies, and that they had been motivated by reasons which they were ashamed to confess²⁵³. By this means a change of attitude in favour of Henry was, little by little, stimulated in the public mind. And all the hopes of his followers were encouraged by the return of the Earl of Salisbury and several knights who returned to swear loyalty to their native ruler. Even Guillaume d'Aubigny; as soon as he had recovered his liberty by the payment of 6,000 marks of silver, he came to rank himself under the royal standard.

Chiefs in attendance *Guillaume [William] Le Maréchal, Earl of Pembroke, guardian of the new English King Henry III. *The Anglo-French coalition in favour of the accession of Louis of France to the throne of England was commanded by the Constable of [le Connétable d']Arras and the Count of Perche.

²⁵² The use of religion by the leaders is the oldest ruse. All theorists of war talk in their own way about *disinformation* and *intox*. Sun Tzu: "The liquidable agents are those of our spies to whom we deliberately give fabricated information." [Chap.XIII, Princ.10]. His commentator Tu Yu added: "We let slip information that is really false and we make sure that our agents know about it. When these agents, working in the enemy's territory, are taken by the enemy, they will certainly report this false information. The enemy will believe it and make preparations accordingly. But of course we will act in quite a different way, and the enemy will put to death the spies." [ibid.] Chang Yu, another commentator on the great Sun Tzu, adds: "... Under our dynasty, the chief of staff Ts'ao once pardoned a condemned man, disguised him as a monk, made him swallow a pellet of wax and sent him to the Tanguts. Upon his arrival, the false monk was imprisoned. He told those who had captured him about the wax pellet, which he soon threw back into his feces. Opening the dumpling, the Tanguts read the letter addressed by Chief of Staff Ts'ao to their director of strategic planning. The chief of the barbarians, beside himself, had his minister executed, as well as the spy monk. Such is the procedure. But the liquidable agents are not confined to a single job. Sometimes I send agents to find the enemy to sign peace and then I attack." [ibid.] *Onasander*, for his part, in his tenth chapter, insists on the usefulness of the role of spies in disinformation and deception: "If it happens that the strategos capture spies, he must not employ a single method with them: if he considers that his army is weaker than that of the enemy, he must kill them; but if he has a fine armament, perfect preparation, great power, soldiers with strong bodies, a disciplined army, excellent officers, experience acquired by training, he will not make a mistake in welcoming the spies, showing them the army in order of battle, and sending them back without harming them, for reports of the superiority of the enemy impose fear. while reports announcing his inferiority give courage."

²⁵³ Ep. Honor. Apud Raynald, p.232.

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Troops engaged *The English army consisted of 406 knights and their retinue, loyal to the Plantagenets. *The Franco-English Confederate army that besieged Lincoln Castle had 600 knights and 20,000 infantry (archers, pikemen, etc.)

Strategy or tactics : *Surprise attack, on the part of Guillaume le Maréchal, against the Franco-English who were besieging Lincoln Castle. Pincer attack by the besieged garrison at the time of Le Maréchal's attack.

Summary of the action: Louis had at last raised the siege of **Dover**, and, to compensate for the time lost at the foot of that fortress, had taken²⁵⁴ **Hertford** and **Berkhamstead**. Pembroke delivered up²⁵⁵ three and two more as hostages to a truce that was to last until Easter; a suspension of hostilities useful to both sides. The French prince used this time to travel to the continent to raise many auxiliary troops; Le Maréchal [Earl of Pembroke], for his part, took advantage of his absence to detach himself still more from the Confederates. At the end of the armistice, hostilities resumed with the siege of **Montsorel** by the Royalists²⁵⁶. To relieve the fortress, the Confederate army, numbering 600 knights and 20,000 foot soldiers, marched from London, under the command of the Count de Perche. His path was marked by all kinds of excesses, particularly perpetrated by the *foreign infantry*²⁵⁷, whose nakedness was clothed and whose poverty was enriched to the detriment of the English natives. The Royalists did not wait for their approach; and the Franco-English Confederates, instead of pursuing the fugitives, entered Lincoln to the delirious acclamations of the inhabitants, and besieged the castle, which was bravely defended by a celebrated hero, Nicholas de Camville. Le Maréchal immediately ordered the crown holders to join him at Newark, and was thus able to count among his supporters 400 knights with their regional vassals, 250 crossbowmen, and a large corps of infantry. Three

²⁵⁴ December 6, 1216.

²⁵⁵ December 20.

²⁵⁶ The term Royalist or Loyalists here refers to King Henry's supporters, of course. Montsorel Castle was located north of Dunstable, not far from Lincoln, England. Ep. Honor. apud Raynald. p.232.

²⁵⁷ That is to say *French*. Soldiers were mostly adventurers or routiers who had come to seek their fortune

days were spent in organizing this army and in carrying out the religious obligations, for the pseudo-papal legate had given to this whole operation a completely mystical character²⁵⁸. He exhorted the soldiers to *fight for their God, their King* [of course], *and their country*²⁵⁹; excommunicated all opponents, and granted the combatants the privileges usually accorded to the crusaders²⁶⁰. This army set out from Newark with *white crosses sewn on their breasts*. The crossbowmen preceded at 1,500m, in the vanguard, and the baggage followed at 1,500m behind the army. This arrangement deceived the Franco-English Confederates, who, taking the baggage for a second corps, shut themselves up within the walls of the fortified city, and, at the same time, out of bravado, made a rapid assault on the castle. But the royalist archers, who had entered the walls of the city by a concealed postern, decimated the ranks of the assailants²⁶¹, and, by killing the knights' mounts, reduced them to the state of foot soldiers in heavy armour. The rest of Earl of Pembroke's Royalists succeeded in storming the North Gate, after a violent fight. At the same time a *sortie* was made from the fortress. Confusion quickly spread through the ranks of the rebellious English barons and the French. The most energetic, unable to stop the human torrent which was spreading through the city, were repulsed. The crowd, of French soldiers and English barons, rushed forward in a mess towards the door located just on the other side. The narrow, winding passage became clogged and the fugitives had to turn around to defend themselves. The "worst fighters"²⁶² were shown no mercy. But little noble blood was shed at the hands of the victors, who quickly, out of cousinage or the hope of ransom, sought not to kill them but to take them prisoner. The Count de Perche alone lost his life. Too

²⁵⁸ William the Marshal had started the false rumour that the French had been excommunicated by the pope, in order to better manipulate English public opinion.

²⁵⁹ According to the formula usually used to ignite popular enthusiasm. The common people who own nothing or almost nothing do not fight for their material heritage; he therefore need exciting ideas to shed his blood, the only good he has.

²⁶⁰ Immediate *paradise* in the event of a violent death. This was enough to enthuse the most wretched to the highest degree and lead them to die bravely for the Plantagenêts and their supporters.

²⁶¹ To understand the somewhat confusing situation, it is good to remember that the attackers the French fortresses, entrenched between their lines of counter-vallation and circumvallation, were at the same time besieged, that is to say, assailed by the army of William Le Maréchal, Earl of Pembroke, who was attacking the town in which the French army had taken refuge. Do not confuse, therefore, the fortified city, on the one hand, and the fortress or citadel or castle, on the other.

²⁶² The poorest; foot troops.

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brave, he fought in the churchyard until his horse was killed. Then, when a voice shouted to him to accept quarter, he replied that he swore that he would never surrender to a traitorous Englishman. Irritated by the insult and seeing that there was no money to be made from this wacky, a soldier plunged his pike, through the count's visor, into his brain. The number of captives amounted to 3 dukes, 11 English barons, and 400 [mostly] French knights. Two hundred others escaped to London by several routes. The [non-aristocrats] foot soldiers, seeking to follow them, were hunted down like animals and massacred by the inhabitants of the villages through which they passed. For once the peasants could take revenge on these impudent soldiers who habitually passed through their villages, killing, raping and looting their families and property.

Casualties : About 400 French and English knights and men-at-arms were taken prisoner. The massacred infantry was not counted. This victory²⁶³, which strengthened the crown on the young king's head, was ironically called *Lincoln's Fair*. Few conquerors were not enriched by this battle. As soon as all resistance had ceased, the city, which had long distinguished itself by its attachment to the barons [favorable to the French king], was given over to plunder. Even the privileges of the churches did not spare them the rapacity of the Royalists. But the fate of the women and children was even more terrible. When the gate was forced, the masses of people thought they would find safety by crowding into boats on the river Witham. Some sank under their weight; others were lost by clumsiness; and the greater part of the fugitives drowned.

As a result of this Franco-English defeat, the English barons in armed rebellion against their new king Henry III Plantagenêt were forced to submit. The destruction of his army confined Prince Louis within the walls of London, where, though he had strengthened the whole gate except one, and forced all the citizens to renew their oath of allegiance, he was continually alarmed by new conspiracies against him. His only hope remained in the power of Blanche of Castile, who personally solicited the help of the most powerful among the French nobility [24 August].

²⁶³ Continue John Lingard.

Battle of Lindsey.

Date of the action : December 1069.

Location : Lindsey, a town by 52.06835, 0.88390

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1069.

Background : After the York Affair, the Anglo-Danes broke camp and re-embarked. William the Bastard left Robert de Mortain and Robert d'Eu behind to watch over them, while he himself went down to subdue Staffordshire. Around Christmas, an unusual affair occurred.

Leaders present : William the Bastard of Normandy commanded the French.

Troops engaged *On the Anglo-Danish side, "a multitude". *On the French side: unknown.

Strategy or tactics : William decided on this winter campaign, which was unprecedented, as all military operations ceased during the off-season.

Summary of the action: Around Christmas 1069, the English in Lindsey had invited the Danes to join them "*for a banquet*". The Anglo-Danes therefore landed. The French, who had been warned by English quislings [*collaborators*], attacked them by surprise. After a long and furious fight, the survivors Anglo-Danes fled to the ships.

Casualties : Unknown, but extremely heavy on the civilian side.

As a result of this English defeat , the North of England was thus pacified. This last winter of great insurrections caused 100,000 deaths on the English side, according to some estimates.

Lindesey's battles.

Date of the Action : 1069.

Location : Region located by 52.06835, 0.88390

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066 - 1072. Pacification campaign of 1069.

Background : Learning of the serious revolt in York, William assembled an army and rushed to the rescue of the French garrison of that city with French troops and English auxiliaries. But the Anglo-Danish fleet had weighed anchor and was sailing up the coast of Lindesey.

Leaders present : *William the Bastard, known as "the Conqueror" at the end of the Conquest, commanded the French.

Strategy or tactics : Free-for-all, melee combat with no overall maneuvers.

Summary of the action : William and his horsemen followed the coast and arrived while the Anglo-Danes were engaged in plunder. The French split into several columns, attacked separately and massacred every troop of looters they encountered in the area, in numerous skirmishes. However, some of the fugitives managed to return to the ships and crossed the estuary on the Yorkshire side where they were safe since the French had no ships to cross.

Casualties : This last winter of great insurrection, which made the French the absolute masters of England, caused, according to some estimates, 100,000 deaths on the English side.

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The consequence of this Anglo-Danish defeat was that this destruction of the immigrant army completed the discrediting of those who wanted to rise up against the French.

Bayeux Tapestry. (sample) While 21st-century Englishmen only want to have been defeated by the Normans, the Bayeux Tapestry describes the Duke's army as "the French" (Franci). Hic Franci pugnāt et ceciderunt qui erant cum Haroldo. Here the French do battle and those who were with Harol fell.



'Battle' of London.

Date of the action : 25 December 1066.

Location : City coordinates: 51°28'58"N.00°07'39"W. The 'battle' took place in and around the basilica of London, England, and on the fore-court. Although the origins of the church are obscure, an abbey housing Benedictine monks was on the site by the mid-10th century. The church got its first large building from the 1040s, commissioned by King Edward the Confessor, who is buried inside. Construction of the present church of Westminster began in 1245 on the orders of Henry III Plantagenêt.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072.

Background : In 1066, on the death of Edward the Confessor, Harold Godwinson became King of England. But William the Bastard of Normandy invaded England, destroyed the English army at Hastings, and then captured London. On December 25, the date of his "crowning" on the throne of England, a fight took place which degenerated into a massacre in front of the very basilica of Westminster where the ceremony was taking place.

Leaders in attendance *The fight was spontaneous and William the Bastard did not take part in it.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown. Several thousands.

Strategy or tactics : Melee, individual hand-to-hand combat, without any idea of maneuver or overall movements. This pseudo battle should be called a massacre

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Summary of the action : On December 25, the basilica of London was filled with French and English who had come to attend William's coronation ceremonies. The streets were crisscrossed with French soldiers in charge of maintaining order and peace. The two prelates, Geoffrey de Coutances and Ealdred²⁶⁴, asked, in French and English, whether the people wanted William as King. There was then a *huge cheer*. Outside, the French soldiers, thinking that William had just been assassinated, began, according to their secret orders, to massacre the English crowd, to loot and to burn. The screams of the victims were heard in the church, where soldiers armed to the teeth entered. The French and English then came out, the French to stop the massacre and the English to defend their compatriots or to run away. The church was completely emptied; only the choir remained in place. While William the Bastard was crowned King of England, the massacre raged outside the basilica. The name *Westminster* is the distorted pronunciation of the old French name *Ouestmoustier*, *moustier* [or *moutier*] being a *convent*, monastery or *church* in général.²⁶⁵

Casualties : Unknown but very heavy, especially on the side of the English civilian population.

Consequence of this English catastrophe : The massacre could be considered a bad omen, but William's ambition exceeded his superstition. Distrust of the French, which had been allayed since the capitulation of London, was again awakened and prolonged the war of colonization until 1072.

²⁶⁴ Aldred (or Ealdred) was the Anglo-Saxon archbishop of York who legitimized the rule of William the Bastard by crowning him King of England.

²⁶⁵ Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IX^e au XV^e siècle, by Frédéric Godefroy (1881). *online*.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Military architecture of the French intended to monitor and control the English population in a very flat country: *the motte and the bailey*. The motte of earth was an artificial hill intended to raise a keep of wood, earth or even stone. Etymology of bailey: "baile, bayle, baille, baylle, baisle, beille, belle, baele, balle, balie, singular, masculine and feminine, entrenched enclosure, external fortification formed of stakes, barrier, palisade, postern, advanced gate through which one has what one wants brought to one in case of need, as Dom Jean François says. In the great castles, it was the open space between the first and second enclosures. It commonly contained the chapel, stores and various other accessory constructions. The second bayle, or inner bayle, was the one that existed between the second enclosure and the keep which was frequently placed in one of the corners. Some castles had three bayles." (Frédéric Godefroy, *Lexicon of Old French* and all its dialects, Honoré Champion Library, Paris. Online at the Gallica bookstore, Volume I, p.553.)



Siege of London.

Date of the action : 29 November 1066.

Location : Capital of England, on the Thames. Coordinates: 51°28'58"N.00°07'39"W

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. First campaign of 1066.

Background : In 1066, on the death of Edward the Confessor, William the Bastard of Normandy invaded England, destroyed the English army at Hastings, and then marched up to London. After demanding the unconditional surrender of Winchester, the French arrived in front of London, which was not yet the capital of England, but the largest city.

Leaders in attendance *William the Bastard, Duke of Normandy, commanded the French army. *English authorities included Edgard the Ætheling²⁶⁶, grandson of Edmund Ironside, the two earls: Edwin and Morkar, the Archbishop of Canterbury Saint Igand. Edgar the Ætheling had officially been crowned King of England.

Troops engaged *About 7,000 men on the French side. *The strength of the English garrison is unknown.

Strategy or tactics : William occupied the vicinity of the city and plundered the provinces of Surrey and Herefordshire in order to bring about the surrender of London. According to the XXXVth Principle of the Greek Strategos Onasander²⁶⁷ : Looting should not be allowed in any circumstance; prisoners should not be carried away; it is the strategos

²⁶⁶ Edgar the Atheling, Saxon prince [c.1050 - c.1125] had vainly opposed Harold II before Hastings; then he endeavoured to prevent William from seizing the vacant power.

²⁶⁷ Onasander was a Platonic philosopher of the 1st century AD. His Strategos was dedicated to Quintus Veranius, consul in 49, who fell during a campaign in Britain in 59.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

himself who should sell them (as slaves). But his reasons were not charitable. For him it was not good for war to bring unlimited profits to the soldiers.

Summary of the action : Wishing not to destroy the city he reserved for himself as his capital, William the Bastard decided to make an impression:

BATTLE OF SOUTHWARK

An elite French corps of 500 cavalry was sent to Southwark²⁶⁸. After a violent fight, it crushed the bourgeois guard which the city of London had sent to arrest the French. As soon as the right shore belonged to the French, they moved up it, forded the Thames at Wallingford where they set up camp to block the river, and then passed London to take the city in a pincer movement and prevent supplies and relief from arriving from the west.

BATAILLE DE BERKHAMSTED

Having occupied the south and west of the city, the French captured Berkhamsted in the north. William ordered the great city to be ravaged so that the Londoners could feel the threatening noose tightening. Finally, victims of the lack of provisions, defeated in all the battles they fought, the English became discouraged and sent an emissary whom William received with presents. Realizing that they were not in danger of being massacred, contrary to what they had been told to manipulate them, the Londoners came to sign their surrender, accompanied by their King Edgar, and to give hostages. William, however, was very cautious, and did not enter the city. He only sent large detachments to occupy strategic points and build a fortress that would later become the famous Tower of London.

Casualties : Unknown.

²⁶⁸ Southern suburbs of the city.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Consequence of this English defeat : It can almost be argued that to hold London was to hold England. The psychological impact on the people was enormous²⁶⁹.



Westminster Abbey, where William the Bastard was crowned King of England on December 25, 1066, the year the country was conquered by the French. The abbey had just been built by Edward the Confessor, who was buried there early 1066. The English-born Frenchman Henri de Yèvre remodeled the nave in the 14th century.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ The capture of London marked the end of the Campaign of 1066.

²⁷⁰ French being in this time the official language of England, the name *Westminster* is the distorted pronunciation of the old French name *Ouestmoustier*, *moustier* being a *convent*, monastery or church

Plundering of Mantes.

Date of the action : July 1087.

Location : Today Mantes-la-Jolie sur Seine, in the Vexin. 48°99', 01°71'.

Conflict : Anglo-French War of 1087.

Context : When William's father (Robert the Devil or the Magnificent) restored Henry I of France to his throne, he was granted the French Vexin²⁷¹. However, during William's minority, Henry I had retaken this county, which was in a strategic position. But the treaty was still valid. From Rouen, the King of England sent his herald to Philip I [the new King of France] to claim "his Vexin". Knowing that William the Bastard was fat and sickly²⁷², the young King of France replied insolently: "*Well, the King of England takes a long time in diapers!*" "*Tell the King of France, replied Guillaume, stung to the core, that I'll be going to Notre-Dame de Paris for my recovery, with 20,000 lances for candles!*" Thereupon he assembled an army to conquer France. These few words, thrown lightly as a joke, were to cause many deaths, great suffering and much destruction on the poorest citizens, including that of the King of England. In July 1087, the latter set out on campaign. His army seemed more powerful than the French one.

Leaders in attendance *William of England led the siege.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown.

in général. [Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IX^e au XV^e siècle, by Frédéric Godefroy (1881).

²⁷¹ A small province of the Middle Ages. It was divided by the course of the Epte into *the French Vexin* [capital Pontoise] and *Norman Vexin (or English during the Hundred Years' War)*, capital Gisors].

²⁷² He was undergoing a slimming cure.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Strategy or tactics : The King of England's expedition was probably limited to the destruction of isolated villages and farms, limited also to the torture and massacre of peasants²⁷³, as the two armies did not dare to confront each other.

Summary of the action : The Anglo-Norman army arrived in front of Mantes[-la-Jolie] in July. The English ruined the walls, plundered the city, burned the cathedral because the Mantois had plundered several cities in English Normandy in recent years. It was during one of these incendiary raids that William the Bastard's horse stepped on a blazing firebrand in the burning Mantes cathedral. The animal reared up and fell on the King of England, thrusting the saddle tree [*l'arçon de selle*] into his belly. William found himself unable to continue his *vengeance campaign* and retreated towards Rouen, the capital of his continental duchy. The war was over. William's susceptibility cost him his life. Some saw this as a Sign from God because the accident happened while he was burning down a cathedral²⁷⁴.

Casualties : Many, but his most important loss was the crown of England: he died. According to his wishes, he was buried in France, in his beloved province of Normandy.

Consequence of this war : This war provoked by the insolence of the King of France had cost the life of the King of England and many deaths and misfortunes. The latter, William the Bastard or Conqueror, died in Rouen on 9 September 1087 as a result of a horse-riding accident. A war of succession ensued between William's three sons: Robert Curthose [Courteheuse], William Rufus [Le Roux] and Henry Beauclerc [Beau-lettré]. Seeing himself dying, William confirmed to Robert, the eldest, the ducal crown of Normandy, and to William Rufus, the second son, the crown of England. Having bequeathed everything before he died, contrary to what biblical wisdom recommends, he died of course alone and abandoned by all his children, for Robert was still staying in Île-de-

²⁷³ In order to irritate the lords and the enemy king.

²⁷⁴ Some modern physicians believe that Guillaume died not from the ventration, but from a myocardial infarction.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

France, and William had immediately left for England to be crowned king. As for Henry, he received 5,000 pounds of silver and went away to take them to safety. William died on 9 September, 1087. His body was transferred to Caen by boat. During the funeral, a gigantic fire broke out and devastated a large part of Caen. In the abbey church, Abbot Dom Gilbert pronounced the panegyric of the deceased king before adding :

"Since²⁷⁵ no mortal can pass this life without sinning, let us all pray in God's love for the deceased prince : make sure that you intercede with Almighty God and forgive him with all your heart if he has had any fault with you." Suddenly, a certain Ascelin, son of Arthur²⁷⁶, stood up in the crowd and began to complain in a loud voice: *"This land²⁷⁷ where you are standing was the site of my father's house; this man for whom you pray wrested it from my father by violence, in the time when he was Duke of Normandy, and, after refusing him any just compensation, he built this church by abuse of power. That's why I claim this land and I demand it publicly. In the name of God, I object to the thief's body being covered with my land and buried in my inheritance."* Justice was immediately done to the victim, lest this fault should harm the soul of the deceased King; sixty [gold] coins were instantly counted and given to the man. But the posthumous troubles of the Bastard were not over; A few minutes later, while an attempt was made to pack his too long and large body into a sarcophagus that was too small, the Monarch's enormous belly burst and a pestilential stench pervaded through the praying assembly, which hastened to finish the ceremony in order to take off. *"His enormous belly, nourished by so many delicacies, burst in an indecent manner and reminded the wise and the foolish alike of the nature of carnal glory. At the sight of this decomposing corpse, everyone was warned to prefer, with fervor and in the asceticism of a saving continence, the Sublime Goods to the delights of the flesh that comes from the earth and will return to dust. Equal is the condition of the rich and the poor, who are likewise doomed to death and corruption. Don't put your trust in false*

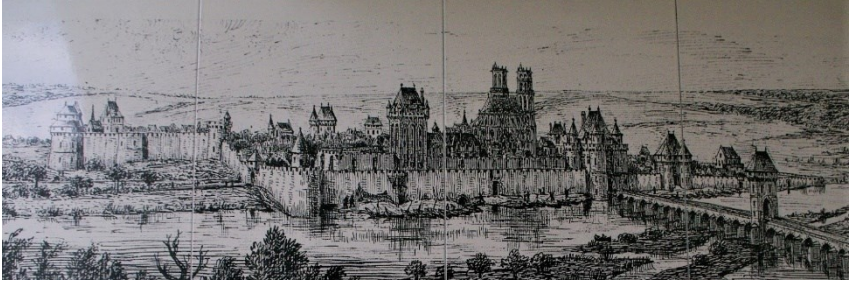
²⁷⁵ Told by the chronicler Ordéric Vital, [a colonist monk of French father and English mother; his father had fought at Hastings], *Historia ecclesiastica*, written in Latin, Editions de Marjorie Chibnall, Oxford, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973.

²⁷⁶ FitzArthur.

²⁷⁷ Ordéric Vital, *ibid*.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

*princes. O sons of Humans! But have faith in the living and true God who is the Creator of the world*²⁷⁸."



Mantes[-la-Jolie] in the Middle Ages



²⁷⁸ Ibid.

Siege and battle of Montacute.

Other name : Montague, Montaigu.

Date of the Action : 1070.

Location : A town in Cornwall in the South West of England. 50°94'; 2°71'.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign in the winter of 1070.

Background : At the same time as Exeter²⁷⁹, the English insurgents from Dorsetshire and Somersetshire attacked Montaigu, but were defeated by French forces from Winchester, Salisbury and London, commanded by Geoffrey de Coutances.

Leaders in attendance *The French were commanded by Geoffroy de Coutances.

Number of personnel engaged *Unknown. Probably 6 or 7,000 French soldiers, including 2 to 3,000 English-Welsh auxiliary troops. The number of insurgents is unknown.

Strategy or tactics : This winter campaign was decided by William the Bastard, whereas at that time it was not practiced. Military operations used to cease during the winter.

Action Summary : Details unknown. No doubt a simple melee battle followed by reprisal massacres.

²⁷⁹ Or almost.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

The consequence of this English defeat was the pacification of the region.



Drawing of Montacute French Castle built by Robert de Mortain

Siege and battle of Montaigu .

Other name : Montacute.

Date of the action : November 1069.

Location: Cornwall Peninsula, South West of England. 50°94'; 2°71'.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1069.

Background : Robert de Mortain, now Earl of Cornwall, had built the fortress of Montacute [Montaigu] to watch over the local population. But during a general insurrection against the French, the English insurgents attacked this castle.

Leaders in attendance *The French Relief Army was commanded by Bishop Geoffroy de Coutances. *The English leaders are not known.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown. Probably 6 or 7,000 French soldiers, including 2 to 3,000 English-Welsh auxiliary troops. The number of insurgents is unknown.

Strategy or tactics : Against the English rebels in Somerset and Dorset, Geoffrey de Coutances led English auxiliaries from London, Winchester and Salisbury, who were well supervised and closely watched by French troops. This principle was later used by the English throughout the British Empire. The battle itself was of the melee and hand-to-hand type.

Summary of the action : Bishop Geoffrey de Coutances arrived with a relief army to clear Montaigu. Coutances therefore attacked the insurgent English army which was besieging the castle. The battle was bloody. Many insurgents were killed and others fled. These are the only details known.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Casualties : Unknown, but very heavy on the English side because of the reprisals (massacre).

As a consequence of this English defeat , the English prisoners were cruelly mutilated.



Montacute motte and bailey site today. Priv.Coll,

Capitulation of Nottingham.

Date of the Action : 1068

Location : City in England, 200 km N.N.W. of London, 52°95', 01°17'

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1068.

Context : The West was crushed in 1067, and the campaign of 1068 was directed to the North. William the Bastard first stormed Oxford, then Warwick, Leicester, and Derby.

Strategy or tactics : Nottingham was important because of its position near the River Trent, a tributary of the Humber and on the axis of the North-South highway. It was a key position in Northumberland. There was a fortress on each bank of the Trent River and a bridge between the two.

Leaders present : *William the Bastard commanded the French forces.

Summary of the action : After Derby, the French prepared an assault on Nottingham. Finally, the city capitulated before the assault, fearing reprisals in the event of resistance²⁸⁰. The French created a stronghold, a fortress, in order to install a garrison. Because this region, once Danish, could hope for Viking reinforcements from Denmark. Guillaume Péverel was given command of the fortress that dominated the city. He also received 55 manors confiscated from local lords in that province, 48 merchants' houses in Derby itself, 12 soldiers' houses, and 8 farmers' houses. Peverel had a personal fortress built in the mountains²⁸¹.

²⁸⁰ Until the nineteenth century, troops had the right to plunder in cities taken by storm. Where from the interest of capitulating before the final assault.

²⁸¹ A real eagle's nest located on an elevation called Le Pic [The Peak]. The ruins can still be seen.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Consequence of this English setback : In this county, where English resistance to the French occupation was weak, a fairly large number of English kept their property.

Nottingham Castle (Priv.Coll.)



Siege of Oxford.

Date of the Action : 1068

Location : City 80 km NW of London, England, 51°75', 01°24'.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1068.

Background : After pacifying the West in 1067, it remained to crush the rebels in the provinces of Mercia and Northumbria. The insurgents, opposed to the French occupation, took refuge in the forests and swamps. They became "outlaws", hors-la-loi, outcasts called "forestiers" or "savages"²⁸² by the French. Edgar the Ætheling became the declared leader of the English resistance by reneging on his oath of allegiance to the French. He took refuge in Scotland where he found a powerful ally in King Malcolm, nicknamed Kenmore [Big Head], King of the Scots. The French campaign of 1068 was therefore directed against the unrest in the North. William was not able to leave until after Pentecost. Before the end of that year, Mathilde of Flanders (Mahaut), his wife, came to England to be crowned queen of that country. There she gave birth to Henry (Beauclerc), the youngest son of William the Bastard.

Leaders in attendance , William the Bastard commanded the French.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown precisely. Usually around 7,000 men on the French side, including 2 to 3,000 Welsh and English auxiliary soldiers. The English soldiers who collaborated with the French to put down local insurgencies came from regions other than their own of birth. The English used the same principle to

²⁸² Wild = salvage = silva (the forest).

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

subdue the Scots with Irish regiments, and vice versa. In India, they used the Sikhs to crush other religions.

Strategy or tactics : Destruction of houses and walls by throwing rocks and fire setting. A breach was made by a mine.

Summary of the action : William the Conqueror began by attacking Oxford which was hostile to him. He assaulted the city and destroyed 400 houses out of 720 according to the Register. As at Exeter, he undermined the walls with a mine. When the walls collapsed and a usable breach was made, he launched an assault and captured the city.

Casualties : Very heavy, especially on the English side.

As a result of this English defeat , the property of the insurgents was confiscated and redistributed to the French.



Oxford fortifications. The name came from a ford for oxen crossing the Thames (that ford was located near the present Folly Bridge). Priv.Coll

Siege of Radepont.

Date of the action : August 1203.

Location : France, department of Eure, canton of Fleury, on the River L'Andelle and the stream of the Hue-d'Eau, at an altitude of 29 m. 49°35'; 1°32'.

Conflict : Feudal conflict between the King of France and the King of England.

Background : In 1199, John Lackland (or the Landless) became King of England on the death of his brother Richard the Lionheart. Philippe II Auguste, King of France, took advantage of this King's weakness to recover from England a good part of its continental domains. But in order to invade the rich province of Normandy, it was first necessary to break the lock, that is to say, the impregnable fortress of Château-Gaillard, built by Richard the Lionheart on the border between the French provinces of Normandy and Île-de-France. Which he did. He then set about taking another border fortress.

Leaders in attendance *The King of France, Philippe Auguste, commanded the French army.

Troops engaged : About 7,000 French soldiers. The Anglo-Norman garrison must have numbered about 500 men.

Strategy or tactics : This town was the Ritumagus of the Romans, 9 Gallic miles²⁸³ east of Rouen. There are remains of a Roman road which was still, around 1070, the only communication route between Radepont and Rouen. Around 1194, Richard the Lionheart chose a site to build a

²⁸³ The Gallo-Roman mile was 1,482 metres long. It was therefore shorter than the American mile, which is none other than the current mile in England before this country adopted the Metric System.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

fortified castle²⁸⁴ : a promontory on which the ruins of the Roman tower of Ritumagus probably stood. All the siege apparatus used at that time was used during this attack: rolling wooden towers, catapults, ballistae and battering rams. The place where the breach was made can still be recognized today by the deeper dislocation of the basement.

Summary of the action : In August 1203, Philippe Auguste besieged the castle. It was only after three weeks of resistance that the English garrison capitulated. Details of the siege are unknown.

Casualties : The French captured the 150 survivors: 20 knights, 100 soldiers and 30 ballistaires.

As a result of this English defeat, sixteen years later, this fortress was completely razed to the ground by the French.

Radepont Castle. Reconstitution by L. Muller, G. Delbarre et S. Alexandre. Priv. Coll



²⁸⁴ Who, along with Chateau-Gaillard and others, were part of the defence system of English Normandy.

Battle of the Rhuddlan Marshes.

Date of the Action : 1070.

Location : Area located on the Wales border. Geographical coordinates: 53.29643, -3.53624.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1070.

Context: As the Frenchman Gerbaud had returned to France and abandoned the earldom of Chester that William the Bastard had assigned to him; the King gave it to Hughes d'Avranches²⁸⁵, son of Richard Gois. Hughes Le-Loup and his lieutenants crossed the River Dee, which formed the northern boundary of Wales at the end of Offa's trench. They conquered the country of Flint, which became part of the county of Chester, and built a fortified castle at Rhuddlan, which was occupied by Hughes's lieutenant, Robert d'Avranches.²⁸⁶

Leaders in attendance *Robert d'Avranches commanded the French army.

Number of personnel engaged : Around 6 or 7,000 men including 2 to 3,000 Welsh and English auxiliary volunteers.

Strategy or tactics : This winter campaign was decided by William the Bastard.

Summary of the action : Robert d'Avranches waged a ferocious war and shed Welsh blood to pleasure and very uselessly. He fought a deadly

²⁸⁵ "Hugues-le-Loup" because he wore a wolf's head on his shield.

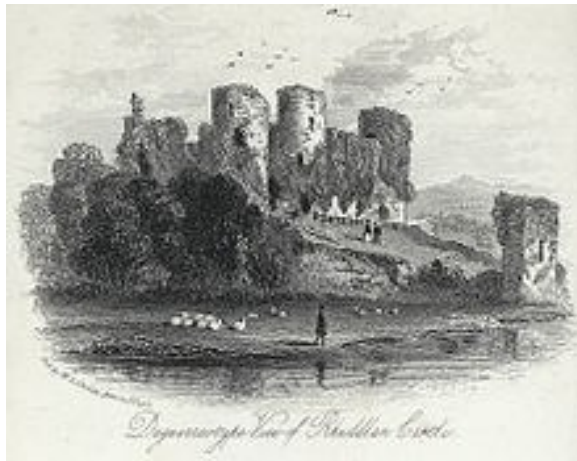
²⁸⁶ Later Robert of Rhuddlan.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

battle with the Welsh near the marshes of Rhuddlan, in which the Welsh were totally defeated.

Casualties : This last winter of great insurrections, which made the French the absolute masters of England, caused heavy losses, especially on the English side.

As a result of this Welsh defeat , this region was now more or less subdued.



Ruins of Rhuddlan Castle in the mid-19th century.



Battle of La Roche-aux-Moines.

Other names : La Roche-au-Moyne, La Roche-de-Serrant.

Date of the action : July 2, 1214.

Location : La Roche-aux-Moines is now a hamlet of a few hundred inhabitants. 46°50'; 1°57'

Conflict : Coalition (against France) of the English and the Imperials. Campaign of 1214.

Context: On 9 June the English army crossed the Loire and laid siege to the fortress. But the small French garrison managed to hold out until Prince Louis' French army arrived.

Leaders in attendance *King John Lackland of England led the English army. *Prince Louis of France [later King Louis VIII] and Marshal Louis Clément commanded the French army.

Troops in action **French* : 300 knights, 7,000 foot-sergeants, 2,000 mounted sergeants, and the 4,000 soldiers of Guillaume des Roches. **English*: about 25,000 men, all English, and Poitevin contingents; in all a little more than 30,000 men.

Strategy or tactics : The strategy of this invasion elaborated by John Lackland was to invade France simultaneously from the South [diversionary attack] and from the North [main attack]. The battle was intended to lift the siege of the fortress. The fortress of La Roche-aux-Moines had recently been built by Guillaume des Roches, Seneschal of Poitou, in order to protect the road to Paris and to watch over La Rochelle, a den of 'brigands' [*i.e* a den of enemies]. An English victory could have had incalculable consequences.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Summary of the action : Prince Louis of France marched to meet the English army which was besieging La Roche-aux-Moines, and, according to custom, sent a '*challenge*' to the King of England, John Lackland. Now the Poitou Cavalry showed little enthusiasm in fighting against the eldest son of the King of France, especially for John Lackland, King of England, whom they despised. The Poitevin barons, urged on by Aymeri de Thouars, declared that they were going to leave the company of the English army to return home, and they complied on the spot. In spite of his immense numerical superiority, the King of England showed himself very uneasy and cautious.

Soon the English army, left alone (without any Poitou troops), began to see in the distance the fleur-de-lis banners in order of battle. The French knights were arriving, shields on their arms and weapons ready for combat. Immediately, the English army abandoned the siege positions, the engines of war and siege, the tents and baggage in the most complete disorder, to take up the positions of pitched battle. It was then, for some mysterious reason, that a general panic broke out in the English camp, while the French garrison, exhausted, shouted with joy and insulted the English knights who began to flee in all directions. The King of England did nothing to stop the flight movement. Seized by a sudden panic himself, he threw away his weapons and helmet, which were in his way, jumped into a boat and crossed the River Loire. His flight led to an all-out disarray of the units that had not yet fled. It was a general stampede for life. In the debacle, everyone wanted to find a boat and groups fought savagely among themselves to get one. A chase took place, and a very large number of English soldiers drowned in the Loire while trying to follow their King. The French fell upon the fugitives, took many prisoners, and collected a huge booty including the gold chests of the royal treasury of England. The surviving fugitives of the English army returned to La Rochelle.

Losses : *The English losses were enormous in terms of soldiers killed in action..., not counting those who had killed or drowned each other while monopolizing the boats to cross the Loire, in a so-called *friendly-fire*.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

As a consequence of this English defeat , John Lackland rode nearly thirty kilometers without stopping. From La Rochelle, where he arrived on the 15th, he sent a letter to his subjects in England in which he evaded his defeat but admitted it by asking for reinforcements : *"You must know that we are safe and sound, and that, by the grace of God, all is prosperity and joy to us.... Those who have not taken part in this campaign, we beg them, with the most intense earnestness, if they hold our Honor at heart, to come and join us without delay. Those who, in any way, have incurred our wrath, will be able by the very fact of their arrival here to consider themselves absolved."* The debacle of the King of England annihilated the plan of the coalition. Philippe Auguste could not be caught from the rear in the North of France. What the King of England aimed at, above all, was to recover the crown of France for his own benefit.

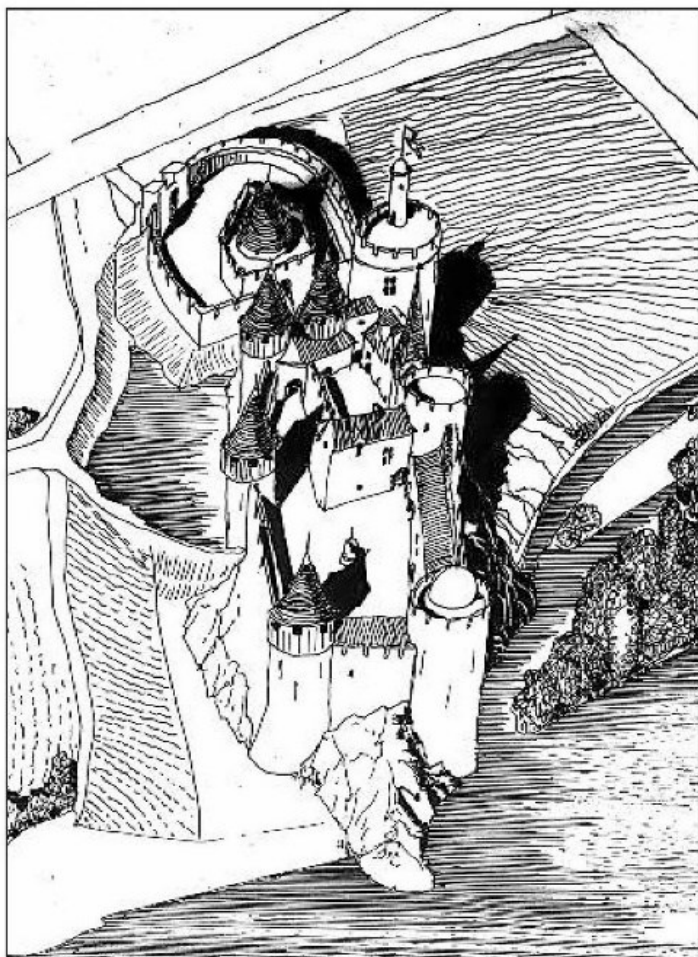
This English defeat marked the end of the domination of the English Plantagenets over Anjou. Anjou became the land of France in the same way as Normandy.

The famous tapestry of Queen Mathilda, exhibited today in Bayeux, was probably the first comic strip. It tells the story of the Conquest and colonization of England by the French under William the Bastard, who came from all the provinces of France, mainly Normandy. Here, Siege of La Roche aux Moines.



French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Drawing by Jean Charcot of the fortress of La Roche-aux-Moines.



Siege of La Rochelle.

Date of the action : 2 July - 23 October 1242.

Location : Port on the west coast of France; 46°15'; 01°15'.

Conflict : Feudal, political, economic war.

Context : On 15 May 1242, Henry III, King of England, sailed for Guyenne and Poitou. In June, he had all French merchants arrested in England. Immediately, Louis IX of France [Saint-Louis] inflicted the same fate on English merchants who were staying or traveling in France.

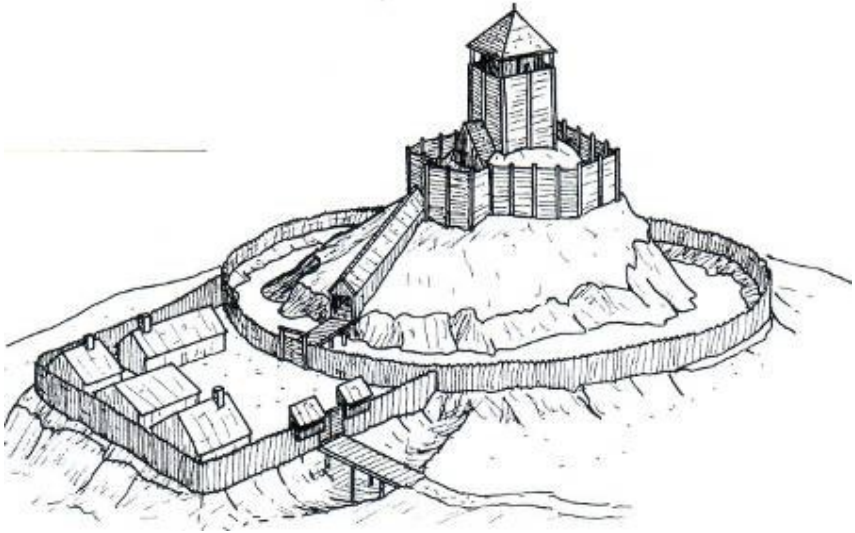
Strategy or tactics : The sailors of the *Cinque Ports* of England²⁸⁷ unleashed piracy against French trade. Louis IX sent a squadron of 80 ships against these pirates (or rather privateers -corsairs-, since they plundered with the agreement of the King of England). They pursued them without respite.

Summary of the action : All the royal galleys of England and Ireland were summoned urgently to Tonnay-Charente. But French ships barred their way and forced them to disperse off to high sea during a storm. Finally, in July, those English galleys, joined and reinforced by the Gascon galleys of Oléron and Bayonne, blockaded La Rochelle. Winter came. The siege was not advancing. The English, for greater security, regrouped their fleet on the Island of Ré, under the protection of a wooden fort built for the occasion around 7 November. In April 1243, six Bayonne galleys resumed the blockade of La Rochelle; in vain. They definitively abandoned the blockade on 25 April 1243.

²⁸⁷ The Cinque Ports of Kent: Dover, Sandwich, Romney, Hythe and Hastings, which were to offer military service to the king in return for certain privileges. Later, Winchelsea and Rye joined the Cinque Ports.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

As a consequence of this Anglo-Gascon failure, sailors from the Cinque Ports remarked : "*The Calais corsairs have inflicted three defeats on us; our losses are irreparable. The English fleet could no longer stand up to the enemy. Breton and Poitevin corsairs were in ambush on the England-France route. Fishing is impossible, pilgrims are caught. King Henry is like a prisoner in Bordeaux*²⁸⁸."



Motte and bailey first built in wood, then in stone to prevent fires. Those motte and bailey kept the **English population** fully guarded by the French colonists who followed William the Bastard. (Priv.Coll.)

²⁸⁸ Finally, the king of England asked for a truce on 23 April 1243 and returned to England, but a Gascon sedition delayed his return for six months.

Siege of La Roche-aux-Moines.

Date of the action : 19 June - 2 July 1214.

Location : *La Roche-aux-Moines*, so called in the twelfth century, was named *La Roche-au-Duc* in 1370 and then *La Roche-de-Serrant* in 1481. At some distance above Angers, this fortress of La Roche-aux-Moines was intended to watch over Rochefort, because the châtelain of Rochefort "committed many robberies!!" 46°98 ; 0°48.

Conflict : Coalition against France, the English and the Imperials. Campaign of 1214.

Context : Eager to reconquer the continental provinces of his Angevin patrimony, the King of England, John Lackland, made an alliance with the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Otto IV, as well as with several disgruntled vassals of the King of France, including the Count of Flanders. In the north, the Allies were trying to march on Paris. King John of England, left Portsmouth with a considerable force and landed at La Rochelle on 16 February. Some pro-English Poitevin barons joined him, and thus the English army grew as it marched. The King of France set out in pursuit of the English, who immediately retreated south in order to draw the French army after him. But, seeing the danger of invasion from the north, Philippe-Auguste understood that it was a trap. He left a large part of his cavalry to Prince Louis with the mission of guarding the Loire to prevent the English from returning, and went north to face the main invasion. Prince Louis therefore entrenched himself in Chinon, Guillaume des Roches in Angers and Pierre de Dreux in Nantes. John Lackland, King of England, then decided to lay siege to the fortress of La Roche-aux-Moines [on 19 June] and to take it before Prince Louis came to its rescue.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Leaders in attendance *Guillaume des Roches, seneschal of Anjou, was soon reinforced by Prince Louis of France [later King Louis VIII le Lion].
*The King of England, John Lackland, led the English army.

French troops engaged *the garrison numbered 300 or 400 men. *English: 30,000 men.

Strategy or tactics : The position of the castle of La Roche-aux-Moines commanded both the road to Nantes and the road to the maritime Poitou. It was therefore necessary to take this stronghold before marching on Le Mans and then on Paris. The fortress was on a high rocky hillside overlooking the right bank of the River Loire. The English king erected gibbets all around the walls of the fortress in order to show the besieged the fate that awaited them²⁸⁹. The English invasion of the South was only a diversion intended to promote the Allied attack from the North.

Summary of the action : The garrison of La Roche-aux-Moines being small, the King of England decided to lay siege to it. Pierriers or balistes [stone throwers] and mangonels (catapults) came into action against the surrounding walls, but the walls resisted. As for the defenders, they fought boldly. However, time was running out as the French relief army arrived. The English were wasting their time in the face of such obstinate resistance. King John of England decided to launch a general assault, and to do so, he undertook to go around the ramparts several times in order to locate the most vulnerable point. At his side walked a squire carrying a large shield or *bulwark*²⁹⁰ which sheltered the English King against any [unwelcome] arrows coming from the top of the walls. It was then that a cunning French crossbowman had the idea of attaching a rope to his projectile which came to be stuck in the center of the large shield. The Frenchman then pulled on the rope and the English squire lost his balance and fell into the ditch where he was killed without delay. Seeing himself unprotected, the King of England ran to take shelter under the jeers of the French mocking soldiers, who however spared his life from their projectiles, but the fear he had felt triggered a *great royal anger* and

²⁸⁹ Very bad tactics that increased their determination to resist.

²⁹⁰ Some historians say "a rack".

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

a deep need to take *revenge* on this garrison that had put his life in danger. Nobility does not always oblige! In retaliation, therefore, he had multiple gallows erected just in front of the fortress gates. Did he mean that the garrison was going to be hanged regardless of the resistance; Or that any delay in a capitulation would result in the death of this garrison? He did not explain it. And in doubt, the determination of the besieged to resist increased; each preferred to fight to the death rather than risk falling into the hands of this vindictive King of England. The siege continued. The assaults by escalation were all repulsed. The soldiers of the garrison demolished the living quarters of the fortress in order to recover rocks and beams and hurl them at the English climbing the ladders. The skirmishes around the fortress lasted for about twenty days without either party making any progress.

However, after three weeks of siege, food supplies began to run out, as did ammunition. The spirit of resistance was eroding, but the shadow of the gallows strengthened the determination of the most hesitant. Help was needed or capitulation would not fail to occur sooner or later. In his entrenched camp at Chinon, Prince Louis hesitated. Should he risk everything in a single battle against an English army, twice or thrice more numerous according to his scouts? Marshal Henri Clément was for a battle, for, if La Roche-aux-Moines were taken, the road to Paris would be open anyway. Soon messengers arrived from Philippe, King of France, ordering his son to give battle to the English. Prince Louis then sent an ultimatum to the King of England: "*Abandon the siege of this fortress or prepare to fight us*". To which the King of England, who knowing that Prince Louis's French army was two or three times less numerous than his own army, replied with bravado : "*Come, you will find us ready for battle. And the sooner you come, the sooner you will have to repent for it.*" Then the French army began to march towards La Roche-aux-Moines.

Losses ♦ Unknown but substantial.

As a consequence of this English defeat , this siege which turned bad for the English marked the end of the Plantagenêt domination on Anjou.

Siege of Romney.

Date of the action : 20 October 1066.

Location : Coastal town located 30 km N.E. of Hastings [England], 50° 99' and 00° 89'.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. First campaign of 1066.

Background : After crushing the King of Norway at the Battle of Stamfordbridge, the King of England was himself defeated by the French at the Battle of Hastings or Senlac. The latter then rested for six days, then marched on Romney's city in order to retaliate against its inhabitants. Indeed, a few days before the Battle of Hastings, a group of Frenchmen had landed *by mistake* near this city and English contingents had come to surprise them and massacre them.

Leaders in attendance *William the Bastard commanded the French army. *The name of Romney's English commander is not known.

Troops engaged *About 7,000 men on the French side. *The strength of the English garrison is unknown.

Strategy or tactics : Storming the city by climbing the walls with ladders. The cruelty of these reprisals was intended to serve as a warning to other English cities that might have thought of rising against the French.

Action Summary : Details of the siege remain unknown. The French stormed the city, burned it, and massacred many inhabitants in retaliation.

Casualties : Extremely heavy on the English side: civilian and military.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Consequence of this English defeat : Terrified by these reprisals, the inhabitants of several other English fortresses capitulated without resistance. By their invasion, the French : "had turned England from a backward disorganized realm to one of the best governed kingdoms in Europe, and though it would have been impossible to get a Saxon of the time to believe it, the conquest was, in the end, a great good for England."²⁹¹ The Chronicler Ordéric Vital tells us that the appearance of the English shocked the French. Their apperance seemed ridiculous to the French and many English did not hesitate to adopt the costume of the occupiers. Nevertheless, most of the Anglo-Saxon nobles, who had been robbed of their property titles and property, refused to adopt the austere costume of the newcomers, their tormentors. Also, many unruly English, considered to be opponents of the French, were shorn, as were the women accused of "*horizontal collaboration*" with the Nazis, in 1945. The English resistance against the French was long commemorated by stories of the Robin Hood style [Robin Hood = The Hooded Thief], who stole from the abominable r."



Romney fortress. Priv.Coll.

²⁹¹. Isaac Asimov, *The Shaping of England*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston [USA] 1969. Page167.

Battle of the Romney.

Date of the Action : 1070.

Location : A river in Great Britain²⁹², now a 10,000-hectare marshy area in Kent. 50° 99' and 00° 89'.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England and Wales by the French, 1066-1072. Colonization campaign of 1070.

Context : The Welsh ruling kingdoms had descended to civil strife during the French invasion of Wales. Caradoc a son of Gruffydd²⁹³, allied himself with the French, in this case William FitzOsborne, Earl of Hereford. And these united forces defeated Meredydd on the banks of the Rumney.

Leaders *French : William FitzOsborne²⁹⁴ and his ally Caradog.
*Meredydd commanded the Wales-English forces.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown.

Strategy or tactics : This winter campaign was decided by William the Bastard, a rare undertaking at that time. The surprise was great for the insurgents.

Action Summary : Details unknown.

²⁹² Romney Marsh.

²⁹³ The son of Rhydderch. Caradog ap Gruffydd (died 1081) was a Prince of Gwent in south-east Wales in the time of Gruffydd ap Llywelyn and the French conquest, who reunified his family's inheritance of Morgannwg and made repeated attempts to reunite southern Wales by claiming the inheritance of the Kingdom of Deheubarth. John Edward Lloyd (1911). A history of Wales: from the earliest times to the Edwardian conquest. *Longmans, Green & Co.*

²⁹⁴ Guillaume de Crépon dit FitzOsbern (1027-1071), seigneur de Breteuil and de Corneilles and 1st Earl of Hereford.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Casualties : This last winter of great insurrections cost many human lives, especially on the English side.

Consequence of this English defeat: Thanks to this victory, the French began to infiltrate South Wales.



Romney Marsh historic fortified church. Priv.Coll.



Siege of Rouen.

Date of the action : early August 1174.

Location : Capital of the French province of Normandy; 49° 44'; 1° 09'.

Conflict : Anglo-French war provoked by the remarriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to the King of England.

Context : The existence of the Angevin Empire was unbearable to the King of France, Louis VII, who had been punished for having repudiated²⁹⁵ his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine²⁹⁶. He therefore strove to put a spanner in the works of the King of England : he supported Thomas Becket, John Lackland [the Landless] and many others in their opposition. Louis VII even pushed for civil war in England. Paradoxically, he had his ex-wife Eleanor of Aquitaine as an ally, because her new husband showed a marked tendency to cheat on her, which had the gift of putting her into furious rage. In a spirit of vengeance, she encouraged her sons to rebellion. Louis VII helped him with enthusiasm. Henry II of England had designated his eldest, Prince Henry, as successor at the head of England and Normandy, his second son Richard as Duke of Aquitaine, patrimony of his mother Eleanor, his third son Geoffrey as Duke of Brittany. The last son, Jean, still too young, received nothing. He was then nicknamed Jean-sans-Terre or John Lackland or "the Landless"²⁹⁷. But all these legacies were only symbolic as Henry retained power firmly in his iron fist, and Eleanor began to encourage her children to demand the responsibilities assigned to them. Henry clearly refused to part with it and his disappointed children took refuge with the King of France, Louis VII, who was very satisfied with the windfall. Eleanor tried to do the same, but

²⁹⁵ "Repudiated" with the authorization of Rome which required a reason for invalidation.

²⁹⁶ She had gone to marry the King of England.

²⁹⁷ John Lackland for the English.

Henry II managed to thwart her plans to escape, exiled her, and lock her up in a maximum-security prison²⁹⁸.

It was also the time of Henry of England's problems with Thomas Becket and the Vatican. Becket²⁹⁹ was a Frenchman born in 1118 in London from French parents born on the Continent. To have [Saint] Thomas Becket assassinated, Henry II declared during a meal : "*Not a single one of the cowards whom I feed at my table will deliver me from this turbulent priest.*" The crime was therefore perpetrated by a band of knights who wanted to please the King. But this only worsened the sovereign's problems. Threatened with losing his throne by a condemnation fromages the Vatican, Henry tried to persuade his people that he was not the murderer. To this end, he embarked on an ostentatious pilgrimage to the sanctuary erected to the glory of his victim Thomas Becket, and performed very severe penances embellished with cruel floggings with knotted straps. One can easily imagine the depth and strength of his love of power to impose these humiliations and tortures on himself, he, the King of England. Then, this done, he returned to his continental state where he succeeded in making peace with his rebellious children. But he kept Eleanor behind bars, for greater safety. In fact, Henry II spent less than half of his long reign in England and no doubt he considered the island to be simply one of his many real estate assets and perhaps not the most important³⁰⁰.

When Philippe Auguste replaced Louis VII, the new king of France continued to plot and encourage discord between this overly powerful vassal and his recalcitrant children, and to fuel his perpetual problems with his vassals. The younger, Richard, Duke of Aquitaine, had to crush his Gascon barons and, in consequence, made himself hated by them. After an altercation with Richard, the eldest prince, who inherited both Normandy and England, suddenly became worried that the violent and jealous Richard the Lionheart would not recognize him as his king when the time came. Henry therefore asked his father to order Richard to swear allegiance to him³⁰¹. Richard refused, of course, and his refusal

²⁹⁸ Thus, in spite of the immense territories that Eleanor had brought to her husband, she did not have the power to make herself respected. Judeo-Christian civilization had totally discredited women; like Islam, which was also derived from it.

²⁹⁹ Or Spoiler

³⁰⁰ According to the American historian Isaac Azimov

³⁰¹ To pay homage to him, that is to say to recognize Henry as his future overlord

led to a war in 1183. As usual, the mood swings and bickering of the Great Ones led to deaths and created suffering in the little ones. King Henry II tried as best he could to calm the spirits. Then, one day, when his crown prince, Henry, mysteriously died, the "fraternal" war ended for lack of... jealousy, for Richard became the heir to the throne. As for Geoffrey, who could also become troublesome, he was killed in 1186 during a tournament. There remained two heirs to the Angevin Empire: Richard³⁰² [Lionheart; 29 years old] and John³⁰³ [the Landless; 20 years old]. John had never revolted, and therefore Henry II preferred him. He appointed him Duke of Ireland, but John was unable to contain the English princes of the Pale³⁰⁴ and the Irish towns subject to the English. He stayed there only nine months. So Henry II gave John the duchy of Aquitaine, which he took the risk of taking away from the immense patrimony of Richard the Lionheart. The latter, who owned the entire Angevin Empire, might well have made this gesture of generosity. But Henry had forgotten that lions do not share. Furious, Richard took up arms, encouraged by Philippe-Auguste of France who had an interest in dividing for conquering. The latter allied himself with Richard, and together they began to seize some fortresses of the King of England [1189]³⁰⁵. Henry was exhausted and disgusted with life; even his dear John had betrayed him by fighting on the side of the French. Henry therefore signed a treaty with the King of France and granted Richard what he wanted: "*Let the world go on as it pleases. Nothing matters to me anymore!*" he announced. And he died a few weeks later, on 6 July 1189. The King of France laid siege to Rouen.

Leaders in attendance *Louis VII of France. *The name of the governor of Rouen for the King of England is unknown. The King of England did not arrive until the end of the siege and did not intervene in the fighting.

³⁰² Lionheart; 29 years old; which was to bring the empire to its apogee.

³⁰³ without land; 20 years; who was to be the great liquidator of the Anglo-Angevin Empire.

³⁰⁴ Of the zone annexed by the British.

³⁰⁵ Selon Isaac Asimov, *The Shaping of England*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston [USA] 1969. Page 232, Philippe n'avait aucun mal à manipuler Richard Cœur de Lion qui avait, et de loin, beaucoup plus de muscle que de tête: «Philip was eight years younger than Richard and at least eight years cleverer (for much of Richard's brains were in his shoulder muscles)...»

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Troops engaged: probably 1,500 or 2,000 men on both sides.

Strategy or tactics : First cunning³⁰⁶, then simple escalation. Because of the configuration of the city, its size, and the size of the besiegers' army, only a portion of the city could be blocked. A bridge over the River Seine gave the city access to the countryside through which logistical help could come.

Summary of the action: When the *siege engines* were installed, an attack was launched by escalation. In fact, the French army was divided into three corps that relayed their attacks 7 hours each, every twenty-four hours. The Rouen population did the same in order to be able to repel the attacks at night. On St. Lawrence's Day³⁰⁷, a *de facto* truce began. The people of Rouen went outside their walls to present activities that would show the French that the siege did not affect them in the slightest : choirs were heard on the bank of the Seine, a tournament was organized at the water's edge, under the eyes of the French. The Count of Flanders, an ally of the King of France, tried to convince the latter to attack by surprise. The French king at first refused, then made up his mind; he gave secret orders to have his troops armed. But some suspicious monks, who were watching from the steeple of a church, saw the merry-go-round and rang the alarm bell. Thus, at the moment when the French were rushing forward, equipped with their long assault ladders, the Rouen people barricaded themselves in their city. The French began to escalate. The fighting was fierce at the top of the walls and victory was for a long time indecisive for each side until a violent and bloody counterattack from Rouen threw the French back to the bottom of the walls. Night put an end to the fierce fighting. The Rouen people were saved.

On 8 August, the King of England, at last freed from his internal troubles, crossed the Channel, accompanied by a Relief Army and by the King of Scotland (who was a prisoner). He entered Rouen a few days

³⁰⁶ Cunning, which is the real tactic advocated by the Chinese Sun Tzu [War is a deception], remains a vulgar imposture for Carl von Clausewitz: "Cunning presupposes a concealed intention and is therefore opposed to the upright, simple, i.e. direct, attitude, just as the witticism is opposed to direct demonstration. It therefore has nothing in common with the means of persuasion, interest, force, but resembles in many ways the imposture which also hides its intentions."

³⁰⁷ 10 August.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

later, from a side that was not guarded by the French. Neither of the two kings pretended to provoke the other in a pitched battle. A few days after, the King of France, having lost all hope of taking the city, raised the siege.

Casualties : Heavy on both sides.

As a consequence of this French defeat , Rouen being the capital of the English province of Normandy, its capture by the French would have had serious consequences for the Anglo-Angevin Empire.



Medieval fortifications of Rouen, capital of the province of Normandy. (Reconstitution)

Priv.coll.

Battle of Saintes.

Date of the action : 24 July 1242.

Location : City of Charente maritime, France. Former capital of the province of Saintonge. 45°74'; 00°64'.

Conflict : Feudal war between the King of France and the King of England over the latter's domains in the South-West of France.

Context : After being defeated at Taillebourg on 22 July, the English army retreated towards Saintes where the King of France followed them on 24 July.

Leaders in attendance *Louis IX of France. *Henry III of England.

Forces engaged *English : 20,000 foot-soldiers, 1,600 knights and 600 crossbowmen, i.e. 22,000 combatants. *French : about 20,000 men.

Strategy or tactics : The British army was stationed at the top of a plateau 20m high, the *Heights of Saint-Vivien*. The French attacked them head-on by climbing the slope. The battle of the foragers, at the beginning of the action, was, alone, a structured action. Foragers were equipped with crossbows, scythes or bows. The general battle, on the other hand, was a juxtaposition of individual deeds in a free-for-all.

Summary of the action : The battle began with a violent engagement between 300 Flemings, supplied and equipped by the city of Tournai, known as foragers³⁰⁸. The English army, eager to repair its damaged honour at Taillebourg, fought valiantly : the foragers were massacred to the last, without any tactical support from the noble French knights, who

³⁰⁸ Fourrageurs: Special forces who went into enemy territory to remove fodder (fourrage) and thus starve their horses. By extension, soldiers who practiced raids and coups de main. They were rewarded with a forage (fourragère).

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were unwilling to lend a hand to that common people. (Shame!) The battle then became general. On both sides, acts of bravery multiplied. Finally, the arrival of French reinforcements deprived the English of the advantage of numbers; for up to the final time the English forces were all in line of battle, while the whole of the French army had not arrived from Taillebourg. Soon, pressed on all sides, the English gave way, following the example of the King of England, Henry III.³⁰⁹, who had fled first in order not to risk being captured or killed. Little by little, all the English troops retreated in disorder towards the walls of Saintes. The French continued.

Casualties : Heavy on both sides.

As a result of this English defeat, the French army bivouacked on the heights of Saint-Vivien, Saint-Macoux and Saint-Eutrope. The continental elements of the English army discreetly dispersed : the lords of Pons, Mirambeau, Barbezieux, and Archiac returned to their lands. For 4 days, from 25 to 28 July, the King of France maintained an apparent inaction. He negotiated with the rebellious vassals, who had helped the King of England, and prepared the lay siege to Saintes. The King of England, warned of the danger, left the city by night on the 28th, and fled in one fell swoop as far as Blaye. On the morning of the 29th, the French army entered the city and Louis IX confirmed the commercial and fiscal privileges of the burghers. The English domination of the West was driven beyond the Gironde, and the King of France supremacy was recognized as far as the Pyrenees. The feudal nobility was once again restrained and resigned.



Castle of Saintes (Charentes Maritimes) Priv.Coll.

³⁰⁹ As his father, King John of England, had done at the Battle of La Roche-aux-Moines.

Attack on Saint-Guérolé-du-Bois.

Date of the action : end of January 1296.

Location : Under the protection of the Abbey of Landevennec, a small seaside village, a very flourishing commercial town, was formed, which was called Saint-Guérolé-du-Bois. This village was located at the bottom of the harbour of Brest at the mouth of the river Aulne, Brittany. The ruins of the old abbey can still be visited. The new abbey³¹⁰ is still occupied by monks and has a very rich old library. The ancient abbey was not exactly where the modern abbey was rebuilt. 48°28'; 4°25

Conflict : Feudal war between the kings of France and England, one being, just for his continental possessions, the vassal of the other.

Context : Deciding to create a continental blockade against England, Philippe IV le Bel (the Fair) replaced the battles with treaties. The diplomacy of Philippe IV the Fair isolated the English from Cape Europe to North Cape, from Sicily to the Baltic, despite a small gap on the coast of Gascony. Treaties made in 1295 held back foreign fleets in preparation for an invasion of England in the spring of 1296³¹¹. *The Hanseatic League* undertook not to buy English wool or leather.

The King of France secretly encouraged this action as an excellent means of detaching the French province of Normandy from England. But serious troubles broke out between the Gascon-English and Norman-Breton merchant sailors; piracy, murder, mutilation, atrocities. It all began in 1292 with a trivial incident between two sailors who wanted to draw water first at Pointe-Saint-Mathieu. One thing leading to another and from retaliation to retaliation everywhere, this led to a real *continental blockade of England*. In the spring of 1293, a Bayonne [and therefore pro-English] squadron was sailing in the English Channel and another

³¹⁰ Called Abbey of Landevennec.

³¹¹ Between Jayme of Aragon and Philippe-le-Bel, June 23, 1295; 21 October with Eric VI of Norway and Sweden; on the 23 October with Scotland.

English squadron in Bordeaux. The French-Normans formed themselves into three squadrons : one guarded the Channel before the island of Batz; the other cruised at *Pointe Saint-Mathieu* [Brittany] and the third at *Penmarch* : 70 English sailors were picked up in small groups and exterminated. The English merchants suffered 20,000 pounds of losses because of these interceptions³¹². On the 14th of April, the English-Gascon squadron met the squadron of the French-Norman merchants in the Channel. The latter was beaten and decimated; the prisoners put to the sword. This victory pushed the Bayonne [pro-English] people to go and plunder La Rochelle³¹³. The gravity of these events, was secretly desired and fomented by the King of France with the sole aim of pretexting an intervention by the same King of France. Philippe IV demanded satisfaction from the King of England. Edward promised to appear before his suzerain, and, as a guarantee of his submission, delivered up to the French the cities of Bordeaux, Bayonne, and Agen for... 40 days. On February 5, 1294, as expected, Philippe IV confiscated these cities outright and refused to return them. Furious at having been duped, Edward armed three squadrons:

- * to the west, Ormond's squadron guarded the St. George's Canal,
- * to the east, the 53 sail squadron of Yarmouth, with Captain Jean de Botetourt and the royal barges, covered the Thames,
- * in Porthmouth, the *Cinque Ports* squadron [Captain Typtoft] and the 200 transports of Guillaume de Libourne embarked for Guyenne an army of 500 men-at-arms and 20,000 infantry, all commanded by Jean de Saint-Jean, Jean II, Duke of Brittany and Guillaume Latimer [1 August]. They arrived on 11 October at the Pointe-Saint-Mathieu in Brittany, pillaged, ransacked, and burned as far as Brest, 5 leagues away, and to a depth of one league inland. But the abbey of Saint-Guénolé-du-Bois repulsed their assaults. Then, from 15 October, the Anglo-Gascons plundered the Island of Ré and massacred a crowd of islanders.

³¹² This upset them much more than the loss of 70 sailors.

³¹³ October 1293. La Rochelle was at the time an economic rival of Bayonne. Politics and economics are still intimately intertwined.

French English battles in the early Middle Ages

Leaders in attendance *Henri de Lacy³¹⁴, Earl of Lincoln, John de Saint-Jean, John II Duke of Brittany, William Latimer, Captain Typtoft and William de Libourne.

Troops engaged : *More than 20,000 English. *The abbey's garrison numbered only a few hundred men³¹⁵, determined to resist to the end.

Strategy or tactics : The English fell twice on this town and wreaked even more havoc there than at Landerneau, which they had just plundered. In fact, after having unsuccessfully assaulted the well-fortified abbey, and experienced the shame of seeing all their efforts against the valiant resistance of the monks fail, they revenged themselves for this failure by burning the city and all the ships anchored in the port. Strategically speaking, these attacks had serious consequences, as Brittany, which was then oscillating between France and England, abandoned the English cause³¹⁶.

Summary of the action : In the month of January 1296, an English fleet composed of 352 sail and placed under the command of Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, left Plymouth and came to anchor in the small roadstead of Portz Liogan, between Cap Saint-Mathieu and Le Conquet. Immediately, the inhabitants of the coast, who knew only too well the purpose of this impromptu visit, fled with their transportable goods. The English admiral, who commanded 26 bannermen³¹⁷, 700 men-at-arms and a large number of infantries, put ashore a landing corps which he sent in pursuit of the fugitives to summon them to bring back their goods, to provide against reimbursement provisions intended for the supply of his troops, and finally to... swear allegiance to King Edward I of England³¹⁸. The Bretons returned and asked for a delay for the delivery of their provisions.

³¹⁴ Or Laci, Lacy or even Lascy. He was descended from a Frenchman in William's army, Ilbert de Lacy, who had fought to conquer England before participating in the colonization of the country. William the Conqueror had given to this Frenchman a large fief in the English county of Yorkshire,

³¹⁵ Including the monks.

³¹⁶ Fortunately for her; we can be convinced of this by considering the fate of its Celtic "sisters": Scotland and Ireland which were martyred in the thirteenth century (Highlands Clearances, Scotland) and in the nineteenth century, Ireland.

³¹⁷ Bannerets were lords who had a sufficient number of vassals to lead them to the overlord's army.

³¹⁸ This was the last straw for a despoiled population.

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The postponement was granted to them by the English, who were not very suspicious, and the delay was really used to save the rest of their food and property. Outraged at being thus duped, the English landed all their troops and ravaged the countryside, rushed on the town of Saint-Mathieu, killed a large number of inhabitants, burned a number of houses or plundered them. From there, they went to the convent, broke down the doors and made off with everything they could take with them, including the sacred vessels, priestly vestments and even... the head of Saint-Mathieu. Then they re-embarked. But the English admiral, very superstitious, had the objects of worship returned *with the exception of the mass wine*³¹⁹.



Creation by Jérôme Houyvet: Abbey of Landevenec in the Middle Ages and Today.

Thus, the English army had marked time in front of the fortified abbey of Saint-Guérolé-du-Bois. It was impossible to storm it.

Casualties : Many civilians were massacred or raped by the English.

As a consequence of this English failure , Indignant at these ravages, John II of Brittany abandoned the English cause without return.

³¹⁹ There were still limits to the fear! In any case, the wine was drunk.

Siege of Sandwich.

Date of the Action : 1069.

Localisation : Angleterre. 51°27'; 1°34'.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1069.

Background : After the Anglo-Danish failure against Dover, their fleet also failed against Sandwich.

Leaders present : Edgar the Ætheling, pretender to the English crown, commanded the English insurgents.

Troops engaged : The Anglo-Danish fleet numbered 240 to 300 ships, and the invading army 10,000 men. From this squadron landed an Anglo-Danish army of émigrés, which was augmented by a multitude of English insurgents commanded by Edgar the Ætheling³²⁰.

Action Summary : Details unknown.

Casualties : Unknown. The problem with casualties is that only the nobility (knights...) were counted and kept alive (because they could be ransomed). Not only were foot soldiers not counted, but those who were captured were simply put to the sword because they were too poor to be ransomed. When we say that money corrupts our modern times, we can see that it was worse in the Middle Ages.

³²⁰ The pretender to the crown of England.

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The consequence of this Anglo-Danish defeat : The successive failures of this expedition helped to calm the spirits by removing all hope of obtaining a change by force.

Fragment of the tapestry of Queen Mathilde showing Odon de Bayeux (the commissioner of the tapestry) ostentatiously taking to the stage, with his baton of command (baculum), to encourage the combatants.



Siege of Shaftesbury.

Date of the Action : 1067

Location : Dorset, England. 51.00683;-2.19500

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French. Pacification campaign of 1067.

Context : *Dorset* was plagued by revolts fomented by English patriots opposed to the French invaders. In retaliation, *Dorchester* was almost completely destroyed. Only a few houses were spared, as evidenced by the Book Register. *Bridport* was also stormed and totally ravaged. *Wareham* suffered the same fate for the same reasons, as did *Shaftesbury*.

Leaders present *Unknown.

Numbers engaged *Unknown.

Strategy or tactics : Storming of the walls by climbing ladders. Breaches created by mines and rock throwing. To calm the unrest and pacify the country, William the Bastard systematically terrorized the local populations by destruction, confiscations and massacres.



Ruins of the fortress of Shaftesbury. PR'IV. COLL.

Action Summary : Unknown.

Casualties : Unknown, although very heavy on the English side.

The consequence of this English defeat was that calm was momentarily restored.

Siege of Shrewsbury.

Date of the Action : 1069

Location : City³²¹ located 220 km north-west of London, not far from the Wales border. 52.71613;-2.74900.



Shrewsbury Castle today (Priv. Coll.)

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1069.

Context : On the Welsh border, the populations also rose up against the French. The heart, the nucleus of the insurrection was Shrewsbury, capital of the Welsh kingdom of Powys. As elsewhere in the colony, it was

³²¹ Shrewsbury was then called *Pengwern* in Welsh Celtic.

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the old aristocracy overthrown by the French who spent their time secretly stirring up the English population against the French.

Leaders in attendance ♦ Eadric commanded the Anglo-Welsh insurgents. Briant led the French relief army.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown.

Strategy or tactics : Shrewsbury was located on the Welsh (right) bank of the Severn, in a bend³²². A narrow isthmus commanded the entrance. The French maintained, of course, a garrison there. As was always the case in colonial armies, the French used English auxiliary troops raised in other regions and supervised by French officers to put down insurrections.

Action Summary : There are few details about this siege. Eadric, with the Welsh and English of Chester, laid siege to the citadel of Shrewsbury. The inhabitants of the city joined the insurgents against the French. Eventually, the fortress was saved by a French relief army commanded by Briant, and composed of French troops and well-supervised English auxiliaries, raised in other regions.

Casualties : Unknown but heavy, especially on the English side, because of the reprisals that followed.

Consequence of this English defeat : Before fleeing, the English insurgents set fire to the town of Shrewsbury, to the great displeasure of the population.



Shrewsbury Castle

³²² Like Besançon in France.

Destruction of Shrewsbury.

Date of the action : winter of 1070.

Location : City in England located 220 km north-west of London, bordering Wales. 52.71613;-2.74900.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of the year 1070.

Background : In the winter of 1070, all of England and Wales rose up against the French. It was the last gasp of the English population before total submission.

Numbers engaged: The number of French garrison workforce is unknown, as is the number of attackers.

Strategy or tactics : Shrewsbury was situated on the right bank³²³ of the Severn, in an almost closed bend like Besançon in France. A narrow isthmus commanded the entrance. This winter campaign was decided by William the Bastard, whereas at that season military operations were never practiced.

Summary of the action : In the Severn Valley, the Welsh and English of Cheshire attacked the French colonists in the county of Herefordshire. They were aided by the English inhabitants of Shrewsbury and by Eadric which had previously attacked the French in the county of Herefordshire without success³²⁴.

But, although they had taken possession of the town of Shrewsbury with the complicity of the English population, the insurgents were unable to make themselves masters of the fortress in which the small French

³²³ The Welsh side.

³²⁴ This is not Eadric Streona, who had died 63 years earlier without legitimate children.

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garrison had entrenched itself. As the help of French counts Briant and William FitzOsborne approached, they burned the city, much to the chagrin of the English population, and ran away.

As a consequence of this English defeat , the burning of the city certainly did not increase the popularity of the insurgents.



French fortress of Stafford built to keep an eye on the English population and allow French colonists to take refuge there in the event of insurrection. (Priv. Coll.)

Battle and siege of Stafford.

Other Name : Stratford.

Date of the Action : 1069.

Location : City in England located 200km northwest of London. Coordinates : 52.80658, -2.11894

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1069.

Context : After being repulsed at *Dover* and *Sandwich* by the French, and at *Ipswich* by a party of English auxiliaries, the Anglo-Danish fleet landed an army in the Ouse.

Leaders in attendance *William the Bastard [or The Conqueror] commanded the French. *The insurgent English army was led by the pretender to the throne of England³²⁵.

Strategy or tactics : The capture of the city was done in the most traditional way possible, with assault ladders. Details of the battle are not known, but it was a banal pitched battle with melee and ferocious hand-to-hand combat.

Summary of the action : The insurgents disembarked from their fleet moored in the Ouse and marched on York, which they attacked. A French relief army came to restore order. The Anglo-Danes broke camp and re-embarked.

³²⁵ Edgar the Ætheling. Edgar Ætheling or Atheling, born around 1051 in Hungary, he probably died in England in 1125. He was the last male descendant of the House of Wessex. His epithet ætheling in Old English designates the dauphin, the member of a royal family with a legitimate claim to the throne (.

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Having left troops to watch the Anglo-Danes at Lindesey, the French marched down to Strafford, the area of which was also in revolt. An Anglo-Welsh army, encountered at Strafford, was totally destroyed. But we know no details of this battle. After which, the French seized the city by assault. In retaliation, they devastated the city and Staffordshire.

Casualties : Very heavy.

Consequence of this English defeat : The Great Confiscations of English land and property, listed in the Domesday Book, for the benefit of French colonists, show that the fighting and resistance were important.



Battle of Taillebourg.

Date of the action : 22 July 1242.

Location : City in the Charentes Maritimes [France], on the Charente. Geographical coordinates: 45.44542, 0.20356.

Conflict : Coalition against France including Henry III of England, the kings of Navarre and Aragon, Emperor Frederick II, the Count of Toulouse [Raymond VII], all the Lusignans³²⁶ and almost all the great barons of Poitou. This formidable coalition was intended to crush the young King of France, who was still considered inexperienced. The vigorous offensive of Louis IX³²⁷ was to thwart these projects.

Context : Urged by his wife Isabelle d'Angoulême³²⁸, Hugues de Lusignan, Count of La Marche, decided, at Christmas 1241, to retract his homage to his suzerain, the Count of Poitiers, who was vassal of the King of France Louis IX. "*The true Count of Poitiers*, he said to Alphonse de Poitiers, brother of the King of France, *is Richard [the Lionheart], Duke of Aquitaine and brother of the King of England.*" The conspiracy soon materialized in the ravages of the French royal lands by the troops of Lusignan, Count of La Marche. At the same time, Henry III of England landed in Royan to support the conspiracy he had hatched. The English had left the bridges of Saintes and Taillebourg undefended. They thought that the King of France would not dare to attack Saintes because of the strong defenses of the fortified town, and that the bridge of Taillebourg was well guarded by one of the pro-English insurgents, Geoffroy de

³²⁶ Lusignan Family was a noble family from Poitou (province of Poitiers in western France) that provided numerous kings of Jerusalem, Cyprus, and Lesser Armenia. This Lusignan was Hugues VII *aka* Le Brun, Count of La Marche (1102-1251), who crossed himself 9 years later for the Holy Land.

³²⁷ Which would become Saint Louis of France.

³²⁸ Mother of King Henry III of England, whose father was none other than the late John without Land.

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Rancon, Lord of Taillebourg. But a humiliating insult from Lusignan his overlord, Comte de la Marche, had secretly led to the defection of Rancon to the King of France. On 21 July, therefore, the French army of Louis IX entered the castle of Taillebourg, which dominated the entire countryside. Only the bridge remained in the hands of the members of the English coalition.

Leaders in attendance *The King Louis IX of France. *King Henry III of England and Hugues de Lusignan.

Troops engaged * English: 20,000 footmen, 1600 knights and 600 crossbowmen, i.e. 22,000 combatants. *French: about 20,000 men.

Strategy or tactics : Individual feudal-type fights between enemy knights, without any idea of an overall maneuver. The bridge of Taillebourg was narrow and fortified. It continued with the "Chaussée de Saint-Jacques" built by the Lord of Rancon. "Two leagues from Saintes, on the right bank of the Charente, Taillebourg was built at the foot of a large tower which commanded the city and all the surrounding countryside... A bridge increased, in the eyes of Louis IX, the interest of this position. It was narrow and fortified, like most bridges built in the Middle Ages."

Summary of the action : On Sunday, July 22, the two armies were in sight of each other. The English had the mission of preventing the French from crossing the Charente. They had taken up positions in the meadows to the right and left of the embankment causeway, in the plain now nicknamed the "Plain of the English". The day before, the French had hastened to gather all the boats available to cross the Charente. Other French warriors were preparing to storm the bridge. Seeing this, the English army began to abandon the left bank of the River Charente to take up a position two crossbow shots from the river. However, a strong force was left to guard the fortified bridge.

Louis IX therefore resolved to force the passage of the river by a frontal attack. To this end, the King of France sent knights and men-at-arms. But the assaults of the French came to break against a motionless

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mass of Englishmen, bows outstretched, threatening lances. Three times the French were repulsed.

They hesitated, discouraged. Seeing this, the King of France ran up, sword in one hand, a pertuisane³²⁹ in the other, followed only by eight of his knights. He reached the vanguard, rallied them, and arrived with them on the causeway of Saint-Jacques, at the moment when both sides were shaken at once. The fight lasted for some time because the English troops resisted furiously at first, favoured by the narrowness of the bridge. But soon Saint Louis, who was not lacking in courage, advanced almost alone; then the electrified French rushed after him on the English, who gave way under the shock. Louis of France crossed the bridge following the English survivors who fled in an attempt to join the English Troop Corps, who, posted beyond the bridge and remaining motionless, began to retreat along the entire line in the direction of Saintes, seeing the defenders of the bridge retreat³³⁰.

Casualties : Quite low because the bridge did not allow for the deployment of large numbers.

Consequence of this English defeat : The psychological effect allowed Louis IX to win the battle of Saintes shortly afterwards.



Iron point of Pertuisane

³²⁹ Halberd with long iron.

³³⁰ Richard of Cornwall then asked for a truce, which was granted. The whole English army continued its retreat towards Saintes to line up under the walls of that city where the French followed it.

Siege of Verneuil.

Date of the Action : 1167

Location : France, Eure department, district of Evreux, on the River Avre and the forced arm of the River Iton, at an altitude of 180 m. 48.73395, 0.92862.

Conflict : Feudal war provoked by the remarriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to the King of England³³¹.

Context : Louis VII of France having repudiated his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine [1152], she married Henry Plantagenet, Duke of Normandy, who soon became King of England³³². The greater part of western France thus found itself to belong to the King of England³³³. During the war provoked by this marriage, the town of Chaumont in the French Vexin was burned by the King of England (Henry II), and its inhabitants massacred. In retaliation, Louis the Younger burned several Anglo-Norman towns³³⁴.

³³¹ The divorce was, of course, annulled by Rome. It was a form of divorce or repudiation. It was easier to have one's marriage annulled when one was part of the upper class, and a refusal by Rome could lead to serious political or religious consequences [Example, Henry VIII of England, who created Anglicanism to facilitate his divorce]. The courts were mainly responsible for repressing crime in the lower, non-privileged class. The clergy, on the other hand, who formed an intermediate class, could be subject to both [ecclesiastical and royal] jurisdictions. But the ecclesiastical tribunals were always less severe with criminals who belonged to the Church than the king's tribunals. Since the Church could not shed the blood of men, a religious was not executed for murder or assassination. Rather, he was deprived of his status as a man of the Church. It took a second blood crime to have him transferred to the King's Justice, which could condemn him to death. Henry II said: "It takes two crimes to hang a priest." The same was true for monks, deacons, theology students, beadles, sacristans, bell ringers and gravediggers. But the question that Henry II could logically have asked himself was: "How many crimes does it take to behead an aristocrat?"

³³² Henry II Plantagenet, born in Le Mans [1133-1189], King of England from 1154 to 1189; Duke of Normandy from 1150 to 1189; Count of Anjou from 1151 and Duke of Aquitaine [1152-1189] by his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine. His religious policy pitted him against the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, who took refuge in France.

³³³ Paradoxically, the English vassal became more powerful than the French overlord, causing the latter to become frustrated.

³³⁴ Destroying the villages of the enemy monarch was a way of impoverishing him by reducing his tax revenues. The fate of the people was not taken into consideration in any way. The Humanism of the Renaissance was still a long way off.

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In the year Henry II became King of England, in 1154, the English Pope Nicholas Breakspere (Breakspere) was elected pope under the name of *Adrian IV*. Adrian occupied the *Holy See* [or *Holy Seat*] of St. Peter for only 5 years³³⁵. Wanting to take advantage of this unique opportunity, Henry II immediately sent the prelate John of Salisbury to Rome to obtain permission... to colonize Ireland³³⁶. This was not only granted but blessed in due form. In the end, paradoxically, it was the Irish who provoked the intervention of the English³³⁷. In 1166, the kinglet of Leinster³³⁸ was expelled from his kingdom. Ruminating on his hatred and resentment, the kinglet wandered through France where he met the King of England, Henry II. The latter granted him permission to raise English mercenaries. The Irishman therefore raised a small English army and went to war in his own island. But all that "gave good ideas" to the King of England. In 1171, Henry decided to intervene in person. He landed near Waterford, on the south-east coast³³⁹. He met with no resistance, for, he said, he had been blessed and sent by the Pope, although the English Pope Nicholas Breakspere (Breakspere) had died twelve years earlier. By force, he created an English zone with a radius of 40km around Dublin, which he surrounded with a solid line of defense, a *palisade of stakes* intended to protect the English zone against the surprise attacks of the

³³⁵ He was then replaced by Alexander III, an ally of Thomas Becket.

³³⁶ Like his great-grandfather, William the Conqueror, he had obtained the authorization of the Sovereign Pontiff to invade England; later, this John of Salisbury will be in the cathedral when Becket is assassinated by the knights of Henry II. But he himself was not hit. He lived a good ten years after Becket's death and died in his bed.

³³⁷ This is often the case; such was the case with the intervention of the Arabs in Spain, and that of the Norwegians in England in 1066. In England, it was Tostig Godwinson, brother of King Harold, and in Spain, the Witiza family appealed to the Arabs who had settled in Morocco. The death of the Visigoth Witiza, in 709, precipitated civil war in the Visigothic Kingdom of southern Spain. Thereupon, the Witiza family, dispossessed, appealed to Masa ibn Nusayr, governor of the Maghreb [West or West] as far as Tangier. Masa had left General Tariq ibn Ziyad in the strait sector to "convert by scimitar" the Berbers, the Christian population that inhabited North Africa. At the call of the Spanish Witiza family, Masa sent Tariq to Spain to support his new allies against the usurper Roderick. Tariq crossed the Strait of Gibraltar [a corruption of Jebel al Tariq] to help them. A bloody battle took place in 711 in which Roderick's army was defeated. But... instead of leaving, Tariq, who thought that Solomon's legendary treasure was stored in Toledo, took that city. At least that was his excuse! Then came the invasion of Spain by the imperialist Muslims. The fear of the scimitar soon converted the Spaniards.

³³⁸ One of the small kingdoms of Ireland.

³³⁹ 120km from Dublin.

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still very primitive Celtic tribes³⁴⁰. Because of this palisaded line³⁴¹, the English sector was called *Le Pale*³⁴². The English also established their hold on other major coastal cities, outside the *Pale*. It was therefore in this time that England began to occupy a part of Irish territory³⁴³.

Leaders present **England* : the name of the governor of the city for the King of England is unknown. **France* : Louis the Younger or the Pious, born in 1120, died in 1180 in Paris. He was *Roi des Francs* from 1137 to 1180.

Troops engaged : Probably 1,500 to 2,000 men on the side of the attackers and a few hundred for the garrison.

Strategy or tactics : Attempted assaults were made by escalation. The long "King's ditches" mentioned under the heading *Consequence* was not the first strategic line of defense in the British Isles (see Hadrian's Wall, Antonine Wall, Offa's Dyke and even Watling Way. The fortifications of this border town between the domain of the King of France and the English province of Normandy had been begun in 1119 and completed in 1131 by the English. Henry I of England had also had a canal dug from Bourth and carrying the water of the River Iton into the ditches of Verneuil for defense and drinking water. The castle of Verneuil had three enclosures separated from each other by a wall and a wet ditch (filled with water), but communicating with each other.

³⁴⁰ Very primitive because they had not been "civilized" within the Roman Empire. Rome had limited itself to England in the archipelago of the British Isles.

³⁴¹ Of pals or stakes.

³⁴² From the Old French pal, pieux, a word that gave the name to the city of Pau (Pals), surrounded by stakes; better evoked in the name of its inhabitants, les Palois. In English, the expression *beyond the Pale* referred to the Irish who lived beyond the *palisade*, considered barbarians because they were not influenced by English morals. Even today, to be *beyond the Pale* means to be ostracized by society because they weren't to be messed with. It was from the 1550s onwards that the "*Plantation of Ireland*" began, with significant English and Scottish protestant colonization, particularly long lasting in what would subsequently become Northern Ireland.

³⁴³ So 8 centuries ago.

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Summary of the action : Louis the Younger, of France, besieged Verneuil, which resisted. Louis burned the outer suburbs. Details remain unknown. But these were probably attempts to scale the walls with assault ladders.

Consequence of this French defeat : To protect himself against any further French invasion, Henry II of England had the long "King's Ditches" dug which passed through Chennebrun, Verneuil, Tillières and Nonancourt ; strategic lines of defense that were less effective than the famous Maginot or Siegfried Lines a few centuries later. In England, the French system of colonization led to the disappearance of the local language; The "*Olde English*"³⁴⁴ of Alfred the Great was dying³⁴⁵. It had become the vulgar language of an uneducated peasantry. Without written literature to fix its forms, without a school to teach its subtleties, Old English became almost a "pidgin" language, a *patois*. All the original endings and declensions, which are still found in modern German, disappeared. If it was not the peasantry itself that forgot it, it was the French who ruled the country with authority. They forced to communicate in French with their peasants, who neglected the old *patois*. By 1100, Middle English had developed into a jargon that retained traces of basic German grammar but without Germanic inflections and borrowed more and more from the French vocabulary used by the Nobility. Middle English became strong enough and flexible enough to succeed in attracting even the privileged French. Little by little, English became the national language³⁴⁶, with its immense capacity to absorb words from other languages and its great adaptability (no doubt due to the fact that it had spent so many years far from the scrutinizing gaze of grammarians)... Naturally, the beginnings of a common language implied the beginning of a fusion of nationalities and cultures. The distinction between French and English, under Henry II., became a shade less distinct than it had been ; then began to blossom the first signs of a common consciousness of

³⁴⁴ Whom the English prefer to call that rather than Saxon.

³⁴⁵ Tiré de Asimov, Isaac, *The Shaping of England*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston [USA] 1969. pp. 209-211.

³⁴⁶ It took 3 centuries for the last resistance [the Courts of Justice] to agree to no longer use French throughout England. The privileged like to have a secret language that helps them maintain their protected status. In the colonies, language served as a barrier for the colonized. Until the 19th century, medical doctors spoke Latin to mask their ignorance.

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"Englishness"³⁴⁷". There were factors that favoured this phenomenon and others that did not. In the latter category was the perpetual involvement³⁴⁸ with France; the fact that the King of England was also Duke of Normandy and that some French Nobility owned properties in both countries; all this made it difficult for the barons to feel English... "



Reconstitution of the fortress of Verneuil. (Priv.Coll.)

³⁴⁷. The term is not a neologism. On the contrary, it existed in French, spoken in England at the time. According to regulations designed to protect the new French-speaking ruling class, a corpse's Englishness had to be proven before the sheriff would authorize its burial. An investigation had to be held. This was to prevent the French from being murdered in unknown places and their corpses hidden and buried under another name. A similar investigation took place later in the British Empire, when a murdered man appeared to be English.

³⁴⁸ Political and military.

Siege of Vernon.

Date of the Action : 1153.

Location : France, Eure department, on the Seine and the streams of Montigny and Saint-Marcel; 120 m above sea level. 49.09221, 1.48518.

Conflict : Feudal war between the King of France and his vassal, the powerful Duke of Normandy, who happened to be King of England.

Context : Louis VII of France having repudiated his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine [1152], the latter married Henry Plantagenet, Duke of Normandy, who soon became King of England [Henry II]. The greater part of western France thus found itself to belong to the King of England. During the war provoked by this marriage, the King of France embraced the cause of Eustace³⁴⁹ and came to attack Vernon in 1153. Stephen's reign, driven by the desire to ensure his succession through his son Eustace, was essentially marked by *anarchy* and a cruel *civil war* that pitted him against his cousin and rival Matilda l'Empresse. Finally, Eustace having died (Thank God!), peace returned and Henry II became Stephen's successor, thus inaugurating the accession of the Plantagenets to the throne of England.

Leaders in attendance *King Louis VII of France.

Troops engaged *Probably 1,500 or 2,000 men on the French side. *The strength of the Anglo-Norman garrison is unknown.

Strategy or tactics : Presumably by blockade and escalation.

³⁴⁹ Son of Stephen of Blois.

Summary of the action : The King of France burned the suburbs of Vernon and withdrew, to return soon, with a larger army, in order to lay siege to the fortified city of which he made himself master in 15 days. Details of the siege itself are not known. When peace was concluded in 1155, Louis the Younger sold Vernon to Henry II for 2,000 silver marks. The many soldiers who died in the conquest of the city were useless. It was just a game, a deal, between aristocrats.



As a consequence of this English defeat , the city had been attacked to thwart Richard, son of William of Vernon, lord of this city, who was plundering the merchants on the main roads. This is why William was obliged to buy the city at a price of money.

Fig.11, Pike: A, the stick; B, iron; C, the pointed ferrule. Fig.12, Half pike: AA stick; A, iron; B, the glans; C, the pointed ferrule. Fig.13, Lance: A, the iron; B, the handle. Fig.14, Javelin: A, iron; B, the handle; C, the ferrule. Fig.15, Javelin: A, iron; B, the handle. Fig.16, Crossbow arrow called garro or quarreau: A, the iron; B, the penis; C, pennons. Fig.17, Crossbow arrow called vireton [because the feathers arranged in a spiral made it turn on itself]: A, the iron; B, the penis; C, pennons. Fig.18, Arc: A, the handle; BB, the extremities; C, the rope. Fig.19, Dagger: A, the iron; B, the handle. Fig.20, Dagger: A, iron; B, the handle. Fig.21, Another dagger: A, iron; B, the handle. Fig.22, Stick sword: A, the blade; B, the handle. Fig.23, Braquemart: A, the blade; B, the handle. Fig.24 & 25, Swordfish: AA, the blades; BB, the handles; CC, the guards. Fig.26, scimitar: A, iron; B, the handle; C, the guard. Fig.27, Cutlass: Iron; B, the handle; C, the shell.

Siege of Wareham.

Date of the Action : 1067.

Location : Town in southern England, located 9 km east of Poole, Dorset. 50.68750, 2.11059.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1067.

Context : Dorset was plagued by revolt movements fomented by English patriots opposed to French colonizers. Bridport was ravaged, Wareham suffered the same fate for the same reason; we know this fact from the Domesday Book Register established by the French administration, which states that in this city not a single house could pay the slightest tax.

Leaders present *Unknown.

Strategy or tactics : In order to crush sedition, the French terrorized the local populations through massive destruction, unjust confiscations, and cruel massacres.

Summary of the action : Dorchester, an old Roman town, the capital of Shire, was besieged, stormed by the French and almost entirely destroyed. Only a few houses were spared, as evidenced by the Book Register.

Losses : unknown but heavy on the English side because of the punitive butcheries. By those massacres, the French wanted the population itself to prevent activists and the old Anglo-Saxon ruling class (like Edgar the Ætheling) expelled by the French, from fomenting and launching insurrections

As a result of this English defeat , this siege led to the almost complete destruction of the city by the French, in retaliation.

Siege of Warwick.

Date of the Action : 1068

Location : City in England located more than 100^{km} north-west of London. 52.28335, 1.58964.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French. 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1068.

Background : After crushing the West in 1067, the rebels in the provinces of Mercia and Northumbria still had to be put down. Edgar the Ætheling, the official leader of the English resistance, took refuge in Scotland. The campaign of 1068 was directed northwards. William was not able to leave until after the Pentecost. He first stormed Oxford.

Leaders in attendance *William the Bastard commanded the French.

Personnel engaged : Unknown; around 7,000 soldiers.

Strategy or tactics : Storming after a breach has been made, using rock throwing and possibly mines to demolish the city walls.

Summary of the action : Then William turned to Warwick, 60 km to the north. The city was a fortress founded in 915. He stormed it.

Casualties: Unknown but heavy on the English side.

Consequence of this English defeat : The essential consequence was the submission of Warwickshire to the French. The latter confiscated the land from the English who had resisted and redistributed it to the French. The English who had "collaborated" kept their property; so Ælfwine became

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sheriff of Warwickshire³⁵⁰. A castle was built in the city for a French garrison and placed under the command of Henri de Beaumont who became 1st earl of Warwick. Eadwine and Morkere, the sons of Godwine, who were coming to meet the French with an English army, abandoned all inclination to resist on learning of the fall of Warwick, and made their submission. Their army dispersed.



Representation of a *couillard* destined to demolish the walls of a besieged city. The counterweight and throwing rod can, with some imagination, represent the scrotum and its

ithyphallus.

³⁵⁰ Ælfwine was one of the few Anglo-Saxons to retain their lands after the French conquest. He lived from 1028 to 1084.

Siege of Winchelsea.

Date of the Action : 1216-1217.

Location : English Channel port. Geographical coordinates: 50.92478, 0.70957. The old port is now covered in sand, 2km from the sea.

Conflict : English Civil War against King John Lackland 1216-1217 or War of English Succession. French participation of Prince Louis.

Context : The English defeat of Bouvines and the crushing taxes it entailed in England provoked a revolt by the English barons. Exasperated, they offered the Crown of England to Prince Louis, heir to the Crown of France, the same one who had defeated John Lackland at the Battle of La Roche-aux-Moines. But it was up to him to conquer this Crown by de-throning the tyrant who oppressed them. In December 1215, Philippe Auguste sent reinforcements to the English insurgents. On 7 January 1216, new French troops, transported by 41 ships, landed in London. Eustache Le Moine, a pirate, ensured the lines of communication between France and England. A siege was established around Winchelsea³⁵¹.

Leaders in attendance *Prince Louis of France commanded the Anglo-French forces. *The name of the English [loyalist] governor of Winchelsea is not known.

Numbers engaged : The actual numbers are unknown; probably 7 or 8,000 men among the besiegers and a few thousand among the besieged.

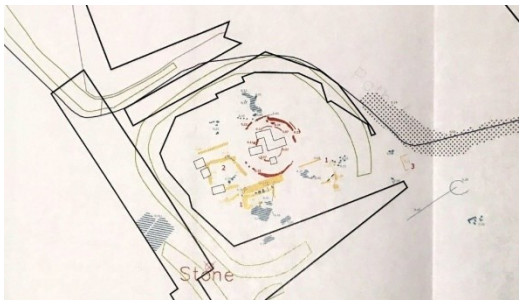
Strategy or tactics : Everything was done to reduce the city: starvation, assaults by climbing, mines, breaches by trebuchet...

³⁵¹ One of the *Cinque Ports* of England.

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Summary of the action : At Winchelsea, to make up for the small tonnage of his ships, Prince Louis had a large castle erected on a large galley, so high that it was wider than the nave itself. On this castle, a perrier³⁵² could break through the enemy's works. The situation was critical. Famine was raging in the partially deserted city. The English fleet of the *Cinque Ports* commanded by Philippe d'Aubigné was massed at the port of Rye and paralyzed the movements of the French. The sudden arrival of 200 French ships sent by the prior of Saint-Michel-du-Wast, bailiff of Boulonnais, freed the French besiegers. The blockading English fleet withdrew without even defending Rye [February 1217]. Louis immediately embarked to seek reinforcements in France because King John had died on 12 October 1216, and part of the English aristocracy no longer wanted this French prince.

As a consequence of this English defeat, the death of John had ended the *English Civil War*. The French aristocracy of England then "almost" formed a common front against the continental French and the capture of this city was not going to have any impact, any appeal on the coronation of the French prince as King of England.



"For centuries, a field to the north-west corner of New Winchelsea has been known as Castle Field. Here, the magnetometer survey uncovered a 40m diameter circular ditch and bank enclosed within a large, ditched enclosure. With the help of experts at the University of Exeter, the team was able to identify these as the remains of a castle's earthworks: King Edward I's castle."

³⁵² A trebuchet.

Siege of Winchester.

Date of the action : November 1066.

Location : Coordinates: 51.06541, 1.31324. City of England, now the capital of the county of Southampton, then capital of England from the ninth to the eleventh century. Located 100^{km} from London and 200^{km} from Canterbury.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Invasion of 1066.

Background : In 1066, on the death of Edward the Confessor, Harold Godwinson became King of England. The Duke of the French province of Normandy, William the Bastard, invaded England, destroyed the English army at Hastings, and then marched up to London. After taking Canterbury, he fell ill and had to stay in bed for a month. But he took advantage of his illness to send ambassadors to Winchester, the former capital of the West Saxon kings.

Leaders in attendance *William the Bastard commanded the French.
*The name of the governor of Winchester is unknown.

Number of personnel committed : Only one delegation.

Strategy or tactics : Diplomacy and threats; war should be used only as a last resort. For Sun Tzu, the strategist of Warring States China³⁵³, *the supreme art is to subdue the enemy without a fight*. He based his strategy on the intelligence of the other and their weaknesses³⁵⁴: Conquering

³⁵³ La Chine des *Royaumes combattants*.

³⁵⁴ Sun Tzu was a Chinese military tactician of the fifth century BC. He wrote *The Art of War*.

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through fear. This is what the world's superpowers are doing today, armed with nuclear bombs.

Summary of the action : An *ultimatum* was presented to the English garrison. Terrified by the fear of destruction and massacre, as was the case with Romney, the English population and garrison surrendered unconditionally and sent gifts to the French.

As a consequence of this English capitulation , the widow Eadgyth lived in this city, the capital of the West-Saxon kings³⁵⁵. The effect on the morale of the local population was therefore significant.



The Winchester Castle's main courtyard,
By Martin Kraft. Priv.Coll.

³⁵⁵ Which for this reason inspired a symbolic value.

The two battles of York.

Date of the Action : 1069

Location : English city located in the north of the country, 270 km from London. 53.96939, 1.08060.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1069.

Context : After the massacre at Durham of a French troop and its leader Robert de Comines who had come to take possession of his new estate, the English insurrection spread. In an ambush, one of the French governors of York, Robert Fitz-Richard,³⁵⁶ was killed along with a few companions who were wandering recklessly in their estate. Guillaume Mallet immediately sent a request for help to William the Bastard who set off. Meanwhile, the insurrectionary forces, led by young Edgar, arrived at York and laid siege to the citadel built the previous year by the French. The insurgents were aided by the populace of York, who were again in the midst of an insurrection.

Leaders in attendance *William the Bastard commanded the French during the first battle. Guillaume Fitz-Osbern was in command of the French garrison during the second.

Number of personnel engaged : Unknown. Probably 6 or 7,000 soldiers on the French side, including 2 or 3,000 English auxiliaries.

Strategy or tactics : A pitched battle without any idea of an overall manoeuvre, with melee and hand-to-hand bloody battle.

³⁵⁶ Or Fils-de-Richard.

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Summary of the action : William the Bastard arrived like lightning with French reinforcements and fell on the besiegers. A furious battle ensued in front of the city of York, in which the insurgent English army was routed. The massacre was horrific and the city of York was completely plundered in retaliation. It had furnished the greater part of the insurgent contingents which were besieging the French garrison in the castle.

Casualties : Very heavy on the English side because of the reprisal massacres.

Consequence of this English defeat : To avoid any resumption of the insurrection, the French built a second fortress on the right bank of the Ouse, the other having been built on the left bank. Thus, the river was now totally under French control. Guillaume Fitz-Osbern, a French from the French province of Normandy, was left as commander of the second castle, of the "motte and bailey" type. As soon as William the Bastard left (he stayed in York only for a week), the English in the region began to agitate again and besieged the two fortresses³⁵⁷, William Fitz-Osbern gathered the two French garrisons of York and again defeated the English in front of the city.

One of the two York citadels on a butte. Priv.Coll.



³⁵⁷ One is under construction.

Siege of York .

Date of the Action : 1069.

Location : City in England located 300 km north of London.
53.96939,1.08060.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign.

Background : After defeating an English army at Strafford, the French again marched towards York as they had learned that in their absence an Anglo-Danish army was preparing to reoccupy York. But the French army remained blocked by the Aire River, whose only bridge had been destroyed, while the north bank was held in force. They stayed for three weeks, during which York was re-agitated by the Anglo-Danes who had fled from the city at the first visit of William the Bastard.

Leaders present *William the Bastard on the French side.

Strategy or tactics : Scorched earth. Based on the principle that a guerilla can only survive to the extent that the population is favourable and supportive to it, the French isolated Scotland by creating *a vast area of scorched earth* in which the life of the outlaws was, if not impossible, at least made difficult by the fear of the inhabitants who would refuse to cooperate. Unfortunately, the insurgents also forced the population to help them, on pain of death. Usually, in such cases, the population obeys the cruelest. The abandonment of the Danes (who, after having encouraged the insurrection, preferred to retreat and leave the English insurgents to their fate), contributed to the disengagement of the English population. The other tactics known as *scorched earth* did not have the same objective. The English destroyed Portugal to starve the French army at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Napoleonic Wars). At the same

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time, the Russians destroyed their own country for a similar purpose. (W.W.II) ³⁵⁸

Summary of the action : Since the French army was blocked by the Aire River, whose only bridge had been destroyed by some English insurgents, a Frenchman, named Lisois, at the head of 60 horsemen, discovered an unguarded ford (a crossing). The French army was thus able to cross the waterway and resume its march towards York, devastating the countryside. Before the city was completely blockaded, the Danes asked to negotiate; they agreed to evacuate the territory on condition that they could take up their winter quarters in the Humber. With the English left alone, York was retaken by the French and the fortresses rebuilt. The English insurgent army retreated to Scotland, with its king Edgar the Ætheling, refusing to fight.

Casualties : This last winter of great insurrections, which made the French the absolute masters of England, led, according to some estimates, to 100,000 deaths on the English side.

Consequence of this English defeat : Then, partly by retaliation and partly by strategy, the French devastated a large region located between the Humber and the Tees : houses burned as well as crops, populations massacred or dispossessed. The French wanted to isolate Scotland by creating a vast *scorched earth area* where the lives of outlaws were forbidden or at least difficult. The devastation was carried out meticulously; and if this tactic was most cruel³⁵⁹, it was strategically very efficient by the fact that never again was this region disturbed by the slightest insurrection at the moment when a Scandinavian fleet landed³⁶⁰. William the Bastard spent Christmas 1069 in York. Banditry and brigandage spread through England, secretly agitated by the fugitive Saxon aristocracy, which groaned under the yoke of the French. It was on the deeds of these highway robbers who (at least officially) stole from the rich French to give to the poor Anglo-Saxons that the famous adventures of Robin Hood were written a few decades later.

³⁵⁸ The most accurate contemporary comparison would be the Algerian War of Independence, in which the FLN cruelly tortured muslim peasants who didn't want to show hostility to the French.

³⁵⁹ If the end can justify the means.

³⁶⁰ The Vikings continued their incursions into the island of Great Britain and mainland Europe.

Battle of York.

Date of the action : 21 September 1069

Location : City in England located 300 km north of London. 53.96939, 1.08060.

Conflict : Conquest and colonization of England by the French, 1066-1072. Pacification campaign of 1069.

Context : After being repulsed at Dover and Sandwich by the French, and at Ipswich by the English auxiliaries, the Danish and English Expeditionary Force disembarked from the invasion fleet moored in the Ouse, and marched on York. The country was in the midst of an insurrection, lulled by the desire to get rid of the French colonists.

Leaders in attendance *The pretender to the crown of England, Edgar the Ætheling, commanded the English insurgents. *Robert Fitz-Richard and Gilbert de Gant commanded the French garrisons.

Numbers engaged : Anglo-Danish fleet³⁶¹, reinforced by an army of English insurgents commanded by Edgar the Ætheling, pretender to the English crown [nearly 10,000 men in all].

Strategy or tactics : The battle was a simple mass attack, without any spirit of maneuver. The French were victims of their too great confidence in themselves; in fact, they had come out of their two fortresses to fight forces infinitely superior, numerically.

Summary of the action : On 21 September, the innumerable Anglo-Danish army came within sight of the two castles that protected York. To prevent the Anglo-Danes from getting too close to the walls of these two

³⁶¹ 240 to 300 ships.

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fortresses, the French had cleared the approaches by burning the neighboring houses, which set fire to a good part of the city³⁶².

It was then that the two French garrisons made a simultaneous sortie and a battle took place amid the still smoking ruins. The French succumbed to numbers. Both citadels were immediately demolished instead of being used against the French, as both fortresses were considered symbols of French oppression in England. After which, abandoning the fruit of their hopeless victory, the Anglo-Danes left the city of York, rendering the victory entirely useless. The Danes re-embarked. The English dispersed and returned home in all haste, resigned to exemplary punishment from the French authorities.

Casualties : According to some, 3,000 French were massacred by the Danes' axes and by English weapons. However, this number seems a bit exaggerated. The Saxon Chronicles, on the other hand, do not specify the number: *Multos centenot hominum francorum necarunt*³⁶³. The corpses of French prisoners were delivered to the wolves by Count Waltheof, an English renegade who had betrayed his oath of allegiance to the French. Guillaume Malet and Gilbert de Gant were taken prisoner.

Paradoxically , this defeat had no negative consequences for the French colonization of England, because on the contrary it demonstrated that even a victory led nowhere. The victors dispersed quickly after their victory, too anxious about the reprisals that would fall on them when the French relief army arrived under the leadership of William the Bastard himself.



³⁶² September 19, 1069.

³⁶³ They [the English] killed a large number of hundreds of French.

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Who would have thought that the Battle of Hastings would somehow trigger a Thousand Years' War between France and England ? This interminable vendetta, interspersed with more or less brief truces, sowed desolation in both countries and cost millions of lives to several nations : the French, of course, but also the Scots, the Welsh, the Irish, the English, and above all the Germans, who supplied hundreds of thousands of mercenaries to England as this Country built up its merchant Empire. But it is unlikely that William the Bastard (later William the Conqueror) who commanded this invading French Army, would have resisted his ambition to seize the English Crown, even if he could foreseen that his choice would result in such a bloodbath. The present alphabetical directory is intended to provide an inventory of French-English battles in the early Middle Ages, from the French invasion of England (1066) to the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War,

